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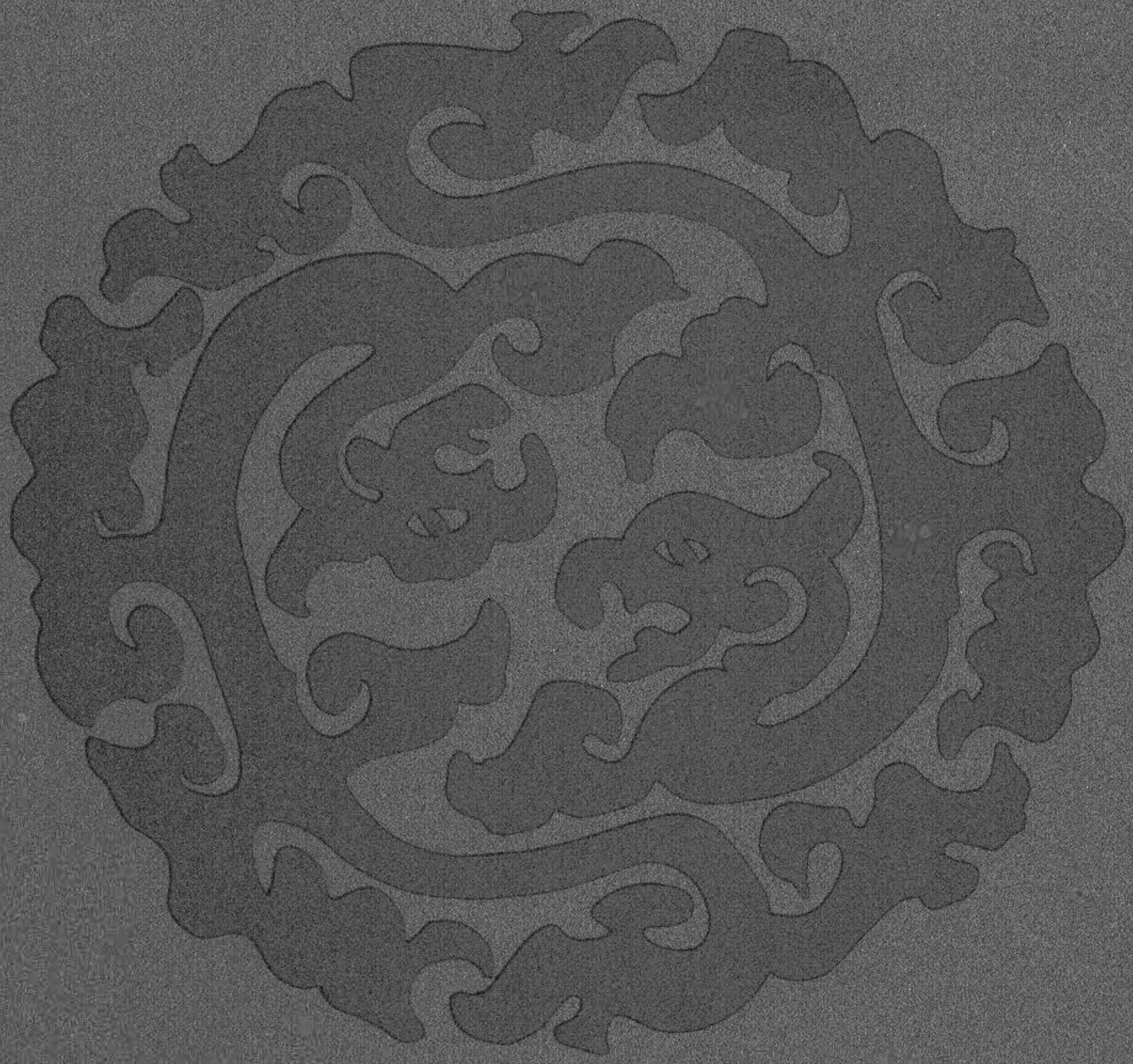

Three Works by Nakano Shigeharu

Translated by Brett de Bary

THREE WORKS BY NAKANO SHIGEHARU:

"The House in the Village"

"Five Cups of Sake"

"The Crest-painter of Hagi"

Translated by Brett de Bary

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INTRODUCTION

The long and prolific writing career of Nakano Shigeharu extends over the greater part of Japan's twentieth century history. Born in the rural village of Takaboko in Fukai Prefecture in 1902, Nakano was the second son of an independent farmer and small landowner who worked for many years as a petty government official in the Tobacco Monopoly Bureau. Nakano's first literary efforts took the form of short poems (tanka), composed while he was a student at the distinguished Fourth Higher School in the provincial city of Kanazawa, on the western sea-coast of central Japan. After entering the German Literature Department in Tokyo Imperial University in 1924, Nakano attracted increasing attention for his poetry, which, in the course of his difficult adjustment to urban life, had evolved away from the traditional tanka form to a free-verse stylee At the invitation of dynamic young radicals like Hayashi Fusao and Ōmachi Atsumi, Nakano in 1925ebecame a member of the Shinjinkai (New Man Society), Japan's first Marxist student organization and a center of intellectual ferment on the Tokyo University campus. Nakano's poems, published with the writings of other Shinjinkai members in a magazine humorously entitled Roba (Donkey), were singled out for

praise by Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, who met Nakano in the last year of his life and encouraged him to persevere in the writing of poetry.

For Nakano, however, the experience of radical political activity, like the experience of the transition from rural society to metropolitan, led to an involvement with new literary forms. By 1927, his last year at Tokyo University, Nakano was primarily absorbed in writing criticism, particularly the essays on art and politics which were his contribution to the often highly polemical debates on these subjects among student radicals of the time. Yet on a more private level, Nakano not infrequently felt bewilderment and even alienation in the midst of the heady debates over Marxist theory, a sense he came to identify with his roots in rural village society, symbolically the "soil" of Japan. As graduation approached, he experienced intense confusion in the face of the seemingly conflicting demands of the poetic sensitivity formed in his youth, his newly awakened political consciousness, and his filial duty to his father, who was pressing him to return to take over the family farm after the death of his oldest son. This dilemma formed the stuff out of which Nakano later created the important novel Muragimo (Gut Feelings, 1954) written with two decades of hindsight about the Shinjinkai era at Tokyo University. Nakano finally opted to reject both his filial obligations as a son and

the routes to bureaucratic success open to him as a Tōdai graduate, choosing instead to embark on the uncertain future of a political activist and artist in the proletarian literary movement.

Between 1928 and 1932, Nakano was an editor and contributor of articles to Senki (Battle Flag) and other radical journals. The left-wing literary movement, which reached its high tide in 1928-9, soon came under increasingly severe government repression and was rent by factionalism. Nakano's body of critical writings from this period, while not always internally consistent, sought to maintain a tenuous balance between a demand for revolutionary consciousness in literature, on the one hand, and an insistence that "what we enjoy in a work of art derives purely from its artistic value,"eon the other.[1] This stance, with its inherent tensions, reflected in part a continuing concern about the gap between Marxist theory and the experiential reality of Japanese life which was to become a major focus of Nakano's literary work.

In 1930, Nakano published a volume of poetry, short stories, and essays, named after his famous poem about Tōdai radicals, "Yoake Mae no Sayonara" (Farewell Before Dawn). His first major short story, "Harusaki no Kaze" (Winds of Early Spring) had been a response to the 3/15 Incident, the mass arrest of 1500 radicals on March 15, 1928. Nakano himself had experienced his first arrest in

the same year, while participating in the vigorous campaign of the Farmer-Labor Party (a legal party supported by the communists) during the general elections of 1928. In 1931, Nakano was formally admitted to the Community Party, which had become an underground organization after being prohibited by the Peace Preservation Law. In October of that year, the Senki press was broken into by the police, who seized and confiscated an expanded volume of Nakano's poetry which was being prepared for publication. Nakano was arrested for a third time in April 1932, indicted, and held for two years awaiting sentence in the Tamarei Prisone He was released after complying with two conditions considered minimal requirements for tenkō (ideological conversion): admission that he had participated in an illegal organization, and a promise to abstain from such activities in the futuree

Tsurumi Shunsuke, in his path-breaking study of the tenkō phenomenon in the Shōwa period, has suggested that coming to terms with the experience of ideological conversion, including its aftermath of shame and guilt, was a profoundly creative and dynamizing experience for certain Japanese intellectuals of the 1930's.e[2] In Nakano's case, the physical ordeal of two years in prison and the psychological trauma of tenkō were quickly followed by the appearance of a number of excellent works which marked his emergence as a mature novelist. "Mura no Ie" (A House in

the Village), translated in this volume, was published in Keizai Ōrai in 1935 and described Nakano's return to the countryside after being released from prison. In the same year, the short story "Dai Isshō" (Chapter One) appeared in Chūō Kōron, while "Suzuki, Toyama, Hachijōjima," also dealing with the tenkō theme, was published in Bungei. An essay by Nakano on the officer's rebellion of February 26, 1936, however, was banned from circulation. In December 1936, an order was issued placing Nakano under police surveillance, which lasted into 1945; the intensification of the war in China after the Marco Polo Bridge Incident of July 1937, led to suspension of publishing rights for Nakano, and two or three other writers, for the one year period from December 1937 to December 1938. As soon as this ban was relaxed, Nakano published the long novel Uta no Wakare (Farewell to Song), a nostalgic, lyrical evocation of his dreamy and unsettled adolescence as a student in the Kanazawa Fourth Higher School.

Nakano's literary output for the entire duration of the Pacific War was limited to two or three works of literary criticism, including a superb study of the tanka poet Saitō Mokichi. Along with Nagai Kafū, Miyamoto Yuriko, and a handful of other writers, Nakano chose to maintain this near silence as a gesture of protest against the war, at a time when the pressures to make public utterances of patriotic sentiment were pervasive in

the literary world.[3] With the war's end, when the Occupation government permitted and even encouraged the reorganization of the Japanese Communist Party, Nakano resumed a life of intense dedication to writing and political work as a party member. A series of acerbic essays entitled Hihyō no Ningensei (A Humane Criticism) and the tampen shōsetsu (novella) "Goshaku no Sake" (Five Cups of Sake) are important early postwar works, while "Hagi no Monkakiya" (The Crest-painter of Hagi) published in 1952, is a gentle elegy to the war dead and their survivors, who live on with their memories in a changing Japan. Nakano produced two lengthy novels in the 1950's: Muragimo and Nashi no Hana (Pear Blossoms), a semi-autobiographical work based on his childhood in the countryside, which was awarded the Yomiuri Prize in 1960. After the 1960's, Nakano became embroiled in a bitter clash with the leadership of the Communist Party and was purged at the age of sixty-two in 1964, ending a relationship which had extended (with the enforced interruption of the war years) over nearly three decades of his life. While a tone of disappointment and disillusionment in the party makes itself felt in his later novels (particularly Kō, Otsu, Hei, Tei), there can be no doubt that Nakano's long involvement with the communist movement, though often tense and beset with adversities, was a major source of creative energy in his literary careere Nakano's work, in which poetic sensibility

and keen psychological insight complement a compelling interest in social issues and the flow of history, is a rich and comprehensive artistic record of the Japanese experience of the twentieth centurye

* * * * * *

In keeping with the prevailing trend in Japanese fiction after the Meiji period, Nakano's writings tend largely to be based on autobiographical material. Most have as their background a specific incident or series of political developments experienced by the author, although allusions to these events (especially in the works of the late 1930's) were often, of necessity, quite subtlee The three works translated here are of particular interest from a historical point of viewe "The House in the Village," called the consummate tenkō shōsetsu (conversion novel) by contemporary critic Yoshimoto Takaaki, has proved to be one of the most enduring documents of the tenkō experience produced by Nakano's generation of writersee[4] "Five Cups of Sake" is a response to another event of major significance in modern Japanese history: the promulgation of a new constitution under the American Occupation government. "The Crest-painter of Hagi," while it is a much shorter work than the other two, draws attention in its quiet, sometimes whimsical way, to the final fading of an era, the era of the Pacific War. Partly because of their intimate relation to historical events, however,

all three works present certain difficulties to the reader or translator which should be noted here.

Of the three, "The House in the Village" follows a relatively unambiguous narrative plot. The two main characters, Benji and his father, Magozō, are skillfully realized, and the story follows the development of the conflict between the two until it reaches a kind of resolution, albeit in a stand-off. Yoshimoto has identified the central theme of the story as the Japanese modernist's (Benji's) confrontation with the "soil of the dominant tradition of feudalism" (represented by Magozō), and has seen Magozō as a vividly drawn symbol of the Japanese farmer or common man.[5] Kamei Hideo qualifies this thesis, pointing out astutely that Magozo, like Nakano's own father, is a retired petty civil servant and has attained a level of learning which is rather higher than that of the average farmer.[6] Indeed, in Magozō's letters to Benji in prison, little masterpieces in their own right, we find a full command of the literary (bungo) style and cultivated seasonal references which can only be explained through a reference to Magozō's education. Nevertheless, Yoshimoto's interpretation of "Mura noaIe" remains an important contribution to our understanding of the story's place in Japanese intellectual history. For over and above the resplendent hitenkōsha (unconverted ones) in their empty prison cells, Yoshimoto would place Benji,

whose temporary compromise with authority brought him into creative conflict with the very bedrock of Japanese society, the farmer Magozōe[7]

One difficulty the reader may have with "The House in the Village" is in catching the story's many indirect references to tenkōe Although we are not told until we are well into the story that Benji has just returned from prison, the painfully sensitive conscience of the tenkōsha (converted one) makes itself felt from the very start. The manner of reference is often so delicate and glancing, however, that we barely notice it. On the opening page of the story, for example, Benji is suddenly, inexplicably "filled with shame" as he sits on the cool verandah ruminating on the sociological data provided by some dusty, old ledger books from the early Meiji period. Probably few readers would immediately identify this as a manifestation of Benji's sense of guilt over being a Marxist intellectual. There is a similar moment, during the conversation with Taguchi, when the shame of the tenkosha flickers ever so briefly across Benji's face.e

> "Hey, An-san,[8] you must be bored sitting around here everyday!"
> "I haven't been back a week yet.ë' Benji's face revealed a trace of embarrassment.

The tenkō theme also tends to be slightly obscured by the fact that explanatory material which would have been helpful to the contemporary reader has been omitted,

either because of censorship pressures or simply because Nakano assumed his own contemporaries were already familiar with it. We are never told explicitly that the process Benji undergoes in jail (being held indefinitely awaiting determination of a final sentence) was standard procedure in the 1930's for the handling of "thought criminals." It was expected that during this time deterioration of health, the psychological strain of gruelling periods of interrogation, and the threat of long years in prison or a death sentence would eventually induce the prisoner to make some kind of statement of ideological conversion. Benji's lawyer alludes to a number of intellectuals who have already made the decision to convert, and Benji appears to know about them. The most notorious tenkō statement, and most destructive of morale in the left-wing movement, was the joint statement issued in June 1933 by two former members of the Communist Party's Central Committee, Sano Manabu and Nabeyama Sadachika, pledging themselves to support the Emperor systeme By contrast, Benji's tenkō statement satisfied only the minimal conditions for being released under surveillance; in order to gain full freedom he would have had to express support for the war and the nationalist ideology.

Furthermore, because of the need for circumspection, communism and the Communist Party are never specifically mentioned by Benjie He refers to comrades in the movement

simply as "friends" or "associates at work"; informers in the party "had taken the wrong positione" We are told that Benji learned of the murder of the proletarian novelist, Kobayashi Takiji, at the hands of the police, but Kobayashi is given the fictional name "Sakuraie" In the famous passage where Benji weeps tears of relief over his food because he has managed to endure one more interrogation without recanting, he cries "I haven't lost the faith! I haven't lost it!" and we must infer that the object of the verb is his communism. After he returns to the farm, it is Magozō who identifies Benji as a Communist; Benji does not use the word of himself.

Much of the richness of the works derives from the way it palpably conveys the aura of "the house in the village" and the atmosphere of rural life. Nakano lovingly describes the physical structure of Benji's home, a traditional farm-house. The image of the house will be vivid enough for any reader, but certainly it is most powerfully evocative to those Japanese readers (increasingly rare today) who may have spent their childhoods in just such a dwelling. Nakano also provides us with a wealth of information about complex interpersonal relations among members of the extended family unit and the village community in rural areas. He is aware of the inferior status of women in rural society, and does not spare us of Magozō's shockingly blunt way of talking about his

wife. Yet perhaps the single most important factor in Nakano's success in conveying such an immediate sense of life in the village is his use of the local dialect of the area of Fukui in which he grew up. With the exception of Benji, all the other characters from the village speak in dialect. Magozō's long monologue at the end of the story is written entirely in dialect and for that reason creates extraordinarily intimate feeling for the man. Regretably, it was impossible to fully preserve the flavor of the dialect passages in translation.

"Five Cups of Sake," written thirteen years after "The House in the Village," is a marked stylistic departure from the earlier work. Although it, too, is usually referred to as a tampen shōsetsu, it falls squarely within the venerable zuihitsu (follow the brush) tradition, and to follow the rambling course of the narrator's thoughts requires some persistence on the part of the reader. The work is given formal unity by being presented as a letter (the narrator addresses himself throughout to "you," apparently a friend from university days and a Communist), but within the letter we find writing in three distinct veins: personal reminiscence, prose poetry, and political commentary. This somewhat unconventional mix makes "Goshaku no Sake" open to multiple levels of interpretation. It is a highly original commentary on the postwar constitution and the tenacious Japanese institution of the

Emperor System; it is a critique of the Japanese Communist Party's early postwar policies; it is an often poignant reflection on the spiritual and physical hardships of the war-time years and the deep scars they have lefte

As is the case with "The House in the Village," an understanding of certain facts about Nakano's life and events in Japanese society at the time "Goshaku no Sake" was written are essential for an understanding of the worke It may come as a surprise, for example, to an American reader to learn that Nakano, whose narrator directs sharp and sometimes bitter criticism at the Communist Party newspaper Akahata (Red Flag), had himself been appointed Cultural Affairs editor of Akahata just a few months before this work was writtene Some critics have therefore seen the work as a statement of editorial policy by Nakano,uttered in the voice of a fictional character who stands outside the party frameworke The concern expressed in the letter over the impact of the media on public conscience, the questions raised about the Communist Party's activities in the school system, and several passages devoted to a detailed analysis of Akahata's repertorial style, all reflect issues Nakano must have wrestled with in his position as editore

Yet if Nakano's criticisms of Akahata were challenging to many fellow party members, his statements on the Emperor and the Emperor system were even more provocative.

Kawaguchi Tsukasa, discussing the "shock effect" of "Five Cups of Sake" in intellectual circles at the time, writes: "the fact that Nakano's first fictional work of the post-war period should have taken the Emperor system as its theme was symbolic . . . indeed, it was dramatic."[9] In the months immediately preceding the promulgation of the postwar constitution, while drafts were being discussed in the Diet (the basic draft was American-authored, an irony Nakano points out in the text), violent controversy surrounded the issue of the status of the Emperor. Conservative political parties favored maintaining the Imperial institution, even if in purely "symbolic form," while liberal scholars and communists raised the issue of the Emperor's war guilt and pressed for complete abolition of the institution. The Communist Party's official position was for abolition.

Against this background, the approach takenein "Five Cups of Sake" is profoundly original. In a period when Japanese society appeared to be undergoing momentous change, the seasoned school principle warns that appearances are deceptive; that not that much has changed. The sight of small children speechless with awe before the Emperor as he visits war-damaged areas, of adolescent girls in tears because they have glimpsed the Empress (at the ceremony for the promulgation of the "democratic constitution," no less) reveals to the narrator the persistent

and pervasive power of the symbol of the Emperor in the Japanese psyche. A change in the status of the Emperor, he stresses, means above all a change in the attitudes of the Japanese people, not only toward the Imperial Family, but towards themselves. Such a revolutionary transformation of consciousness cannot be achieved simply by debates among the intelligentsia and procedures at high government levels. On this point, he feels the Communist Party's handling of the issue is superficial and short-sighted.

At the same time, by proposing an alternative approach of "sympathy for the Emperor as a human being," the narrator offers a radical critique of the centuries-old tradition of Emperor worship. He demands that the new, democratic consciousness, if it is to be thorough-going, must acknowledge that the Emperor, too, is an individual.e In taking this position, moreover, he by no means sidesteps the issue of the Emperor's war responsibility. The Emperor bears responsibility for the war because the Emperor system (of which he is a "prisoner,ë according to the narrator) played its role in leading the nation to war. Yet to acknowledge this point is to recognize that, by the same token, every Japanese individual bears responsibility for the war. It is because tennō mondai (the Emperor problem) is linked to this painful process of admitting collective responsibility for the war that the narrator insists that solving the Emperor problem is "fundamental to

the establishment of a national consciencee"

A few other points of difficulty which may be encountered by the reader of "Five Cups of Sake" in translation should be mentionede Nakano displays a keen concern throughout the work for the psychological and social implications of the use of language. Because some of the discussions focus on an interpretation of subtle nuances of vocabulary or grammatical constructions, they may at first appear obscuree The narrator, for example, makes some technical grammatical points in explaining to his students the proper use of the Chinese character sei (征 , to conquer) and the compounds ōshō (応召 , respond to an order) and shōshū (召集 , to draft), words frequently used during the war in talking about military service. An explanatory footnote has been added to clarify this passagee It serves to emphasize the narrator's sense of his powerlessness during the war; he could express opposition only in this extremely subtle way. In this connection, it should also be mentioned that the narrator's statement that he may soon be "purged" comes rather suddenly in the opening sections of the story. He is referring to the purges which were carried out under the Occupation government just after the war, aimed at removing from public institutions people who were seen as having promoted a militaristic or ultra-nationalist ideology. A man of scrupulous conscience, he fears that he may have compromised

so much with the war-time educational policies that he could be accused of actively promoting them.

Finally, the reader of the translation may be troubled by some very long, rambling sentences in the text. Nakano breaks into a prose poetry style in such sections and in the translation I have stayed close to the original structure at the risk of awkwardness. In addition, fresh combinations of words or unexpected images frequently appear in the text (carry-overs from Nakano's youthful poetic style). These, too, have been rendered rather literally. When the narrator describes the expressions on the faces of girls in the post-office who are irritated with him, for example, I have rendered chiisai zōo (小さい憎悪) literally as a "small hatred" rather than choosing a more familiar but less surprising phrase like "faint disdain."

In "The Crest-Painter of Hagi" the theme of recalling the war years, now an ever more distant memory, is continued. Nakano, an aging (and, he suspects, increasingly superfluous) member of the Communist Party is dispatched to mediate a dispute in the provincial city of Hagi. The story describes his walk around the town (machi-aruki), a favorite topic in Nakano's works. A major point of interest is Nakano's use of imagistic associations to link one passage with another and structure the narrative flow. One of the most effective uses of this device is the scene where the sight of candied oranges in a small

sweet shop calls up the memory of similar candies eaten during the war, and leads to several pages of reminiscence about the deprivations and occasional small joys of wartime life. Throughout the text we find reverberations between one image and another, or one word and another, creating an effect similar to that of the use of engo (word association) in classical poetry. The story reveals Nakano's continuing debt to the waka, renga, and haiku poets he studied in his youth and appreciated throughout his life.

The House in the Village

Stripped down to a single loin-cloth, Benji sat on the mat floor of the big, empty store-house, translating. He had hoped to do as much as he could while the day was still cool, but he had gotten stuck in one place, and though it was now well past noon, he had not progressed at all. He scratched his bony ribs, crushed out his half-smoked cigarette with his fingers, rolled over on his back, stared at the ceiling and finally gave up, put his summer kimono on again, and went back out to the house. The house had been left wide open. Looking into the living room, with its smooth wooden floor, Benji could see the old drum, covered with soot, hanging down from the black, plaited bamboo ceiling. On the door frame--that, too, was pitch black--hung the lacquer lantern box with its water plantain crest; the ancient clock with the motion-less pendulum hung on the ochre-colored pillar at the center of the house.

Benji opened the closet at the end of the verandah. There was a clanging noise as he took out a metal candle-holder with a burnt-down stub (who knows how long ago it had been used?), a bronze hibachi rotting through in places, and the skeleton of a screen. He set them aside and removed what looked like five or six worn ledgers from an old-fashioned bookshelf at the back of the closet.

The afternoon sun shone down on the verandah, but since it came in flickers through the bamboo grove, it was

not very hot. The books Benji had pulled out bore the words "Religious Classification of Village Population," and dated from some time early in the Meiji period.[1] In among men's names with familiar endings like -emon, -hei and -suke, were scattered women's names: Roku, Kuma, Tora, Yoki, Koo, Sute, Tari, Yai, Chiri, Kichi. Even Benji, whose grandfather had been Tahei and whose mother was Kuma, blinked at the sight of names like Yai or Chiri.[2] "The social phenomenon reflected in the change in farm women's names. . . ." A problem began to formulate itself in his mind, but in the next instant Benji was filled with shame. That the problem had occurred to him in this form, that he had even attempted to make a generalization about society from the material in front of him seemed to him somehow irreverent.

"Is your father around?"

Taguchi had come in through the open front door and was standing inside the entranceway. Taguchi was Benji's father's partner in the local life insurance agency, which the two ran as a side-line to farming. He was nearing fifty years old, but he had a fair complexion and pink cheeks unusual among farmers in those parts. Famous in the village for his outrageous sense of humor, Taguchi was a man with a mischievous smile playing constantly around his narrow eyes.

"Not around, eh, your father?"

"Yes, he is.é' Benji said. "I think he's right outside somewhere . . ."

"I'll just wait them.é' Taguchi popped out a pipe-case and sat himself down on the step that led to the wooden floored room. [3]

"Why don't you come in?" Benji invited him.

"Well, maybe I will,é' Taguchi answered and stepped up into the living room. To drink cool tea from the pot and talk to this man--surely there was one man like this in every village--made Benji feel happy.e

"Here,é' Taguchi reached into his shirt pocket and took out a piece of gift paper, folded and wrapped with decorative colored string. "Will you give this to your father?" The paper bore the words, "With Appreciation, Yamabe Ninkichie"

"Appreciation for what?" Benji asked.

"Oh, the payments he got the other day. I don't know why people think they have to do this sort of thing, but once he brings it over, what can you do?"e Yamabe Ninkichi's oldest son, Shinkichi, had died, and although Ninkichi had had his insurance policy less than half a year, he was able to collect 3,000 yen in insurance payments. It was not as if there had been malicious rumors to dispel, but through the good offices of Benji's father, Magozō, Ninkichi received his payments without a hitch. Taguchi had come over yesterday to tell the story, half as a joke,

so Benji was familiar with it. It seemed that Ninkichi felt an obligation to Magozō and had brought this gift.

"He should have given it to Magozō directly," Taguchi said, "But knowing the kind of man your father is, he tried to get me to give it to him instead."

"The kind of man your father is . . ." Magozō was renowned in the village for his honesty. What was more, he lacked that streak of obstinacy so typical of farmers. Long years working here and there as a petty official had earned him neither wealth nor status, but he had been able to send his two sons to the university. Unlike his father, Tahei, who for all his good sense had been notoriously stubborn, Magozō, a big man, one hundred and fifty pounds in weight, had not once been known, even verbally, to get into a fight. When mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law in the neighborhood used to come to him with their quarrels Tahei had scolded them unsparingly. Magozō, when his turn came, simply sat and made small talk until the women dropped the issue themselves. Even when his oldest son, Kōta, died less than six months after graduating from the university, Magozō uttered not a word of complaint. When there was a fire in the area, Magozō thought nothing of walking four or five miles in his straw sandals in the middle of the night to see what he could do to help. Born into a family of drinkers from generations back, Magozō was second to none in the amount he could put away,

but at worst he would simply begin to talk in a very loud voice . . . he never lost control of himself. During thea time when his second daughter, Tsune, was constantly leaving her new husband and running home, Magozō's nephew Jōsaku, who was visiting one night, cracked, "He's incorruptible, that father of yours, except when it comes to his children. . . ." It was to Magozō alone that Jōsaku poured forth his own troubles.

In his life as a petty official Magozō had gleaned a polite, if not a high-level, education. Even now, when his wife Kuma had reverted back completely to her original nature as a farm woman, Magozō maintained a diffidenta understanding of the world of his daughters and sons. On the anniversary of Shinran's death and other festival days at the temple, Magozō was often asked to sit with the money-collectors. All he had to do was sit there, they would say, dragging the reluctant Magozō into the counting room, and nothing untoward would occur among those who were handling the money directly. Finally, by contrast to Kuma, who had grown uglier and uglier with age, Magozō possessed a type of finely chiselled face rare among farmers.

All these things being what they were, his own family, his own relatives, and the people of the village, too, looked up to Magozō. His status as an independent farmer and small landlord, with close to seven and a half

acres of land, also had something to do with this. Even Kuma, who from time to time would complain, "Your father's too honest for his own good," in her heart of hearts thought herself a useless old woman and idolized her husband. Benji was the samee When his trial opened, the first time he testified in court, the judge asked about his home life. Since Benjiés famdly background had already been thoroughly investigated, he was uncertain of the meaning of the question. When he asked, and was told that it meant whether his relationship to his parents had been a satisfying one or not, Benji felt utter contempt for his interrogators and sneered at them in his heart. He could only conclude that bringing up questeons about family life at the trial of a political prisoner was another one of their wretched tracks. Still, Benji felt like hurling out the words, "Even if you had brought me here for picking pockets, would that have been anyone's fault but my own?"

"Your father won't want to take it," Taguchi said, "But I think he would make the other party happeer by keeping it."

"I'll tell him that," Benji answered.

"Well," Taguchi stretched out on his back, "Tell me what it's like in Tokyo. Can you make any money down there? Or is it just as bad as here?"

"It's pretty bad." Benji told him. Actually, he knew nothing about the present situation in Tokyo directly.

"Well, I've been thinking things overa. . ." Taguchi chomped on the cigarette in his mouth and grinned. "I'm already fifty, you know."

"You? Fifty, Mr. Taguchi?" Benji burst into a laugh. Taguchi laughed, too. The Taguchi Benji had always known was a lady-killer, a man full of youthful good spirits who would light into you with his teasing the moment he laid eyes on you. Girls inatheir late teens were known to fleea whenever they crossed his path.

"My life isn't getting any better," Taguchi said. "Your father knows all about this, but when my wife was alive we share-cropped two and a half acres. Today, my son and I do close to four and what happens? We have to take work on the side to make do.a'

"How old is Shigeki now?"

"Nineteen. He's a strong one, a big fellow, too. But with all that brawn what do you think he's up to? He wears his hair long, slicks it up with oil . . a and whenever they're having services at the temple, off he goes. I can't very well tell him not to go to the services, cana I? No. I sure can't. For all I know he could be going off to spend the night with the ladies in Tanbomachi. But there's nothing I can do about it.a'

"Really . . . and how many daughters do you have?" Benji asked.

"Three. The oldest one is in a hair-dressing school

in Kyotoe You can get a license there in six yearse This is her fifthe Why it's worth going through all that just to fix up people's hair I don't know, but she has only one year left now, so I'm not about to tell her to come homee As far as Shigeki is concerned, the sooner I get him married off the better . . . but he hasn't even had his physical for the draft yet. His old man wouldn't mind getting a woman, though."

Taguchi's wife had been hospitalized several years ago and had committed suicide while she was theree Benji had been told about the event in a letter, but at the moment he couldn't remember the details. Taguchi grinned, showing his teeth as he sipped his tea and rolled a cigarette. After a few minutes, he slapped his thigh as if something had suddenly come to hime

"Hey, An-san,[4] you must be bored sitting around here everyday!"

"I haven't been back a week yet.é' Benji's face revealed a trace of embarrassment.

"That's true, isn't it.é' Taguchi was mulling something overe "How about going to the Kamizaki Shrine with me tomorrow? We can have a great timee I don't go over there because I'm worried about the after-life, you knowe How about it? You can drink your fill of sake, with a few spring potatoes to go down with it, and then jump right into the ocean for a swim.[5] The scenery is out of this

world. But I guess you know all about that."

"Yes, when I was in middle school we went there once. We all drank sake and felt very tipsy when we were riding in the boat.ė'

"Ah, that area has changed since the old days. Well, I guess someone like An-san has seen all sorts of beautiful places, but Kamizaki is still pretty good.ė'

Benji felt a slight impulse to go, but not enough to put into words.

"Last year I went with Teramae of Satokubo.ė' Taguchi went one

"Teramae of Satokubo? I thought he died." From the time Benji and the others were children they had known of Teramae, a man exactly like Taguchi in a neighboring village. Benji had heard, however, that Teramae had diede quite a while ago.

"He's alive as you and me!" Benji's mistake seemed to give Taguchi pleasuree "It was the older brother who died. But there's a younger brother, and he's just like the older one. The only difference between them . . . is whether the mosquitos die or not.ė'

"Mosquitos?" Benji couldn't tell if he were hearing something wrong, or if Taguchi were making a joke.

"When you go like this" (Taguchi slapped his cheek), "and pull your hand across your cheek, the mosquito comes off with blood on it, right? Well, when it was the older

brother's face, the mosquitos were hiding in the holes, so even when you went like this (Taguchi slapped his cheek again), the mosquitos didn't die."

Benji burst out laughing. Teramae had been famous for the pockmarks on his face.

"We used to call him Sweat Paradise." Taguchi continued without cracking a smile. "When you're weeding or planting in the fields the sweat comes out drop by drop (Taguchi imitated the sweat), right? The drops come out and trickle down your face in a stream. Well, Teramae the older brother sweat like anyone else, but as soon as one drop came out on his face, plop . . . it would fall into a hole. It would take a little rest in that hole, and then it would spill over and plop--fall right into another one. So the sweat never got tired, see? The sweat had a pretty good time on Teramae's face, so we called him Sweat Paradise. It wasn't very nice, really." Taguchi stood up. "Well, it's just my luck to sit here waiting and your father hasn't shown up."

"Oh, he's coming," Benji said. But Taguchi was already walking to the edge of the room, slapping the dust off his hands. "Look how cool it's gotten . . ." The earthen-floored room at the entrance to the house was beginning to get dark. Taguchi fished for his straw sandals and put them on. "No, I really can't stay. I always enjoy chewing the fat with your father, but I've got to get back

and get the rice going. Shigeki, that over-sized idiot, doesn't even know how much water to put in!ë' Taguchi's playful banter resonated with the loneliness of a farming man who had to act as both father and mother to his childrene But Benji was not very sensitive to this. "Take care of yourself!" Taguchi's black silhouette floated on the surface of the door, where swarms of mosquitos were rising. Benji said goodby at the door.

Beneath the clock with the motionless pendulum that hung on the pillar, Magozō, Kuma, and Benji--father, mother, and son--ate their evening meal. An electric lamp spotted with insect droppings hung down from the ceiling and glared on the lacquer rice bowls, the plates, the tea-bowls, and the sake bottle with its matching cups.e Magozō sat tailor-fashion with his right foot on his left thigh, wolfing down rice from a mulberry bowle At intervals, he would stick his finger into hise mouth and remove something stuck in his teeth. All thirty-two of his big yellow teeth were there. He talked steadily, stroking his face with his heavy palm and clearing his throat loudly from time to time. Magozō's large, close-cropped head, the deep line across his brow, the vertical crease between his two eyebrows, his long, high nose, his enormous, horse-like, double-lidded eyes with countless lines of wrinkles radiating from the corners, his great lips, his imposing jaw, his chin--every feature of his face was splendidly big.

The skin on his neck was creased with lines which ran down to his broad shoulders. His bare chest, hands, and face were all burned the color of persimmon juice, while only the calves of his legs were white. The sideburns by his large ears, too, sparkled whitely. His moustache was the color of black sesame seeds mixed with salt. At intervals, Magozō would rock his body back and forthe

Kuma bent forward over the table; there was something furtive in the way she ate. With her hair pulled back into a crude knot, wearing an apron of traditional kasuri weave, she crouched in a position which could be identified neither as sitting nor as squatting.[6] Her nose was running and while she ate she sniffled and scratched at her feet. According to traditional custom, Kuma's eyebrows had been shaven since marriagee Her small, triangular eyes cowered in her face, while her buck teeth made her lips protrude whenever she closed her mouth. The skin between her upper lip and her nose was criss-crossed with wrinkles. Her body was thin and terribly shabby-looking.

Benji wore glasses for near-sightedness. He had his short hair combed straight back, with sideburns which were so thin the skin was visible underneath. His light eyebrows, high, narrow cheekbones, and slightly protruding mouth were inherited from his mother. His chin, too, was small, and his narrow neck led to slender shoulders. His shoulders, trunk, hips, hands and feet were all thin and

hollow-looking. His legs were like the legs of a bird. Although his eyes glittered, there was no strength in them. The left and right sides of his face didnėt match. He was round-shouldered and, as he sat at the table, bones showed in his bare cheste His complexion was sallow.e The overall impression he gave was of poor health and bad nervese

Magozō was sixty-nine, Kuma was sixty-two, and Benji was thirty-three.

The smoke of the mosquito smudge made of himoro wood curled upward, deepening the black of the soot-covered ceilinge Mosquitos flew into the room from the bamboo grove outside. From time to time a trolley car would go past on the other side of the grovee The trolley ran between the fields.

It was winter-time, exactly five years ago, when Benji had last eaten dinner here. Tomi had still been alive then, and Sada had been at home, too. Tomi was already married. Discussion of Sada's marriage came up. Benji had thrown in some uncalled for comments on the subject, but he did not take it very seriously. He had stayed at home for about a monthe In the spring, he wrote to tell his parents he had married Taminoe Kuma asked for a photograph so she could see what kind of woman Tamino wase and they had sent her a blurry, amateurish snapshot of thee two of them. About half a month after the photograph

arrived, Magozō received word that Benji had been arrested. Although his first son, Kōta, had died twelve years earlier, just after graduating from the university, in his response to the news of Benji's arrest, Magozō sensed his age. That summer, he received a letter from Benji in jail. Magozō explained what had happened to Kuma. Benji was released at the end of the year and Magozō had invited him to come home, but Benji didn't go. During this time, Magozō's oldest daughtere Tsune, who had been living with Benji, came home once or twicee Tsune had talked with them about Benji, but her explanations had been forced and they hadn'te understood much. In just a little over a year, Benji was arrested again. There was a sudden shift in the tone of the newspapers around this time and Magozō himself felt somehow uneasy. He turned sixty-seven, and suddenly, with all his massive bulk, he felt the impact of his age. His second daughter, Tomi, who already had a bad case of tuberculosis, gave birth to a child; first the baby died, followed by Tomie When Tomi died, her infection was passed on to Tsune, who had come up from Tokyo to nurse her.

In the beginning Magozō had hidden Benji's second arrest from Kuma, but he could not keep such a pretense up forever, and so he told her. Unlike the previous time, this news came on the heels of her grand-child's and

daughter's deaths, and Kuma went half-mad. She would wake up in the middle of the night, shake Magozō into consciousness, and bemoan the situation. Magozō would offer explanations. Kuma would be persuaded and fall asleep. In a little while she would shake him awake again, bringing up all the same complaints in exactly the same ordere Magozō's endurance wore out.e He tried to get Kuma to visit the temple, but Kuma wouldn't budge. Sometimes she would cry out in the middle of the night. Magozō made a mat floor in the warehouse and put Kuma inside it by herself. Tamino and Tsune (Tsune had returned to Tokyo by this time) seemed well enough, but their address changed constantly and their letters were raree Kuma had her good days and her bad onese

At the time, Magozō was having some relatives, independent farmers, till most of their seven and a half acres; the land they tilled themselves was not even enough for he and Kuma to eat off of. The current market had him hamstrung. The bigger the crop he raised, the bigger the drain of capitale But it was impossible to sell land, even if one wanted toe At times he envied Kuma, who had been able to go half-made When he looked back over his nearly seventy years of life, it seemed to him that the hopes of the first half had been smashed, one by one, in the second half, and that the tempo of their destruction had speeded up as he reached old age, the age of decaye

With everything crashing down around him, Magozō felt that one rash move would be the end of everything. He did not consider himself in any way demeaned by his son's imprisonmente Still, he didn't feel like having everyone know about it and talk to him about it all the timee As far as he was concerned, Benji's ideals and the work he did were sentimental. He had been particularly annoyed when Benji, using their own village as the model for a novel he was writing, had put in the name of a certain large land-lord without fictionalizing it in any way. "What good can you accomplish that way?" he felt like writing to Benji, but the thought that Benji was in jail stopped him. "He hasn't suffered enough yet. He doesn't know what life is all about," Magozō thought. He remembered himself, covered with lice, hauling artillery during the Sino-Japanese War. But it began to occur to him that he should deal with the situation as Benji's father. The thought even came as a kind of consolation.

Benji himself was spending the days rather quietly. There was always the possibility that he might be let out tomorrow, he thought, and since, even if it were five or six years away, at any rate, he would someday be set free, he began studying Germane A burning desire to read arose within him. When he calculated it, he realized the amount he could read in one year was almost negligible; his aim was to acquire at least a rudimentary knowledge in

a number of different areas. The fact that he had undergone the most recent interrogation without making any mistakes gave him peace of mind.[7] By the second time around he had gotten the hang of things, and had even learned how to get what he wanted from the prison guards without a fight. Life for Tamino and Tsune seemed to be difficult, but nothing to worry about.

Benji was able to think over the failures and errors they had all made, particularly his own. He felt that the positions taken by those he had personally been close to were consistent and correct; he was able to learn that even those whom he had felt had taken the wrong position were making efforts, in their own ways, to check the problem.[8] Even the news that Sakurai, who had gone underground, had been murdered by the police had not come as a shock to him.[9] Once, when Tamino was detained by the police and was not released for fifty, then a hundred, days, Benji, thinking she would be indicted, tried to work out a program of reading for his wife, who had never gotten past primary school and who didn't even know how many prefectures there were in Japan. Nor was Benji greatly worried about his parents. His mother had gotten so she could hardly read a newspaper properly and she never wrote letters. But he enjoyed his father's letters.

"I read your letter. I am happy to hear that you are healthy in body and mind. Today, the twenty-seventh of

Julye is the day we call 'Doyō no Gorō', meaning the fifth day since the height of summer began.e[10] There's a saying among farmers that the year's harvest is determined by the weather on "Number Five." That makes this the most impore tant day of the year for us. The weather here was clear, with a noontime temperature of 95 degrees, so hot the water looked like it was boiling in the paddies. Your father was in the fields, along with everyone else, by five this morninge weeding. I finished at nine and spent the afternoon repairing things. In fact, since there's a half-day celebration today, the whole district is taking a half-day holiday. I'm happy to say that, the way things look today, we may be in for a good harvest this year.

"Tomi's condition improved for a time with the injections, but with the death of the baby (Died, 11 P.M., July 11, at Takai Hospital, eight days after admission.e Diseasee intestinal virus.) and the heat, her fever has broken out again and she is now in great pain. Unfortue nately, even the doctor's prognosis indicates there is little prospect of recovery.e (Old age seems to have made a coward out of your father.) As for Sada and her child, whom I might say are not only in good health but as healthy as horses, there isn't the slightest need to worry about them.

The difficult plight of the farmers has been brought on by the slump in agricultural produce prices. Oncee

taxes and fertilizer expenses are paid for, there is hardly any income left. Mr. Fujita recently closed a deal for part of his land, but the paddy-field he bought for five yen a tsubo sold for only seventy sen per tsubo. From this I think you can imagine the general situation.

"At sixty-seven, your father hardly belongs to this world any more but, perhaps because those who survive this long have nothing but troubles, this year I feel as if I have suddenly aged. With the slump in produce prices added to our family misfortunes, I'm at a loss to balance our accounts. Everything is at an impasse right now and I, like a man sailing the ocean without a compass, can only let things follow their course. I want you, too, to be fully aware of this. I'm an old man now and even if I were to starve to death I could accept it as my fate. But I'm worried about how your mother and sisters would bear up, and what would become of them. Your mother does nothing but whimper day and night and it pains me to see with my own eyes how nursing the sick and all the rest of it has worn her down to skin and bones. Your letters tell us to be cheerful, but things just get darker and darker. Fortunately, your grandmother and grandfather have already departed for the other world and never had to see our family in this dismal condition--for this I am grateful. But there's no end to it when I write about these things, so I'll stop here. I believe I will be informing you of Tomi's death in the near future."

"Your letter arrived. The whole family is delighted by the news that you are well and not succumbing to the heat. Since your father and mother, at least, are in excellent health and surviving the work on the farm, please have no fearse We pray for your good health. Your father has gotten so senile he no longer feels like one of the living. That's all for now.ë'

"I read your letter of January 9. I'm happy that you have surmounted the bitter cold in good health. Your mother and father, too, have greeted the spring of their sixty-ninth and sixty-second years without mishap. The snow is now about two and a half feet deep on the flat ground.

"Life never goes the way we want it to. Inagaki Shinnosuke died this month, leaving behind four children of whom the oldest is ten. Takamatsu Teiichi (adopted son of the main branch of the Takamatsu family) has now been bedridden for three years with a stroke. It has been three years since Onoyama Noboru went insane. Last year, Matsumoto Kaneyoshi's oldest son, Natsujirō, and his eighteen year old sister died within one month of each other, so now only the old couple are left. Fortunately, the families next door and to the north of us seem to be working hard and putting a little bit away. The Ikeuchi's in Satokubo are also making a concerted effort as a family, which makes me very happy.

"I'm worried about the Dōmoto children, who do not seem to be very bright. Usually people call children like this "Eight Pennies," but Dōmoto's children hardly seem worth six.[11] Keep up your guard against the cold."

But around this time Benji's health had worsened. The doctor didn't tell him how high his fever was, but he would wake up three or four times a night dripping with sweat. Since the infirmary was too full to take him, he had to dry his bed-clothes in his own room. Once December came, the bed-clothes never really dried. Benji's preliminary trial was over and the date of the public trial was drawing close. The approach of the public trial meant the approach of imprisonment. Benji thought of his syphilis--his treatment had been interrupted again by this arrest--and he felt terrified of the mental illness which might accompany it. The knowledge that two people in a nearby cell had recently gone insane exacerbated his fear. In the face of repeated refusals, he sent petitions through the guards, the chief warden, and the doctor, requesting some treatment for his persisting fever and his syphilis. He wrote a request for bail and had his wife and father do the same. Thinking that the most urgent thing was to get rid of his fever, he tried to make his requests for medical treatment through several different channels at once. Pursued by nightmares in his feverish sleep, he would wake bathed in sweat, battling with

different terrors under a window which had frozen in its frame beneath the snowe He was more afraid of madness than of death, he thought, but in these moments of fear he could not even distinguish which of the two was terrifying him. One time he had also struggled with the fear of suicidee He thought of the hidden, ugly parts of himself which would be exposed if he lost his mind. Remembering a demented geisha he had seen several years ago in a detention house, he decided that those who are fastidious in daily life maintain their dignity even in insanity, and he made an effort to keep himself mentally prepared.

When he was led into the courtroom, he discovered the face of his father among the faces of his friends. Hoping to be released on bail, he had asked his father to come, although the old man was hardly up to such a journeye The verdict was announced, and immediately repealed. Meanwhile Benji, grasping at every last shred of a possibility, asked his father to talk with the prosecutor directly. When Magozō came to see Benji the day before returning to the countryside, he appeared crushed by the knowledge that his efforts had come to naught, and by the way in which his powerlessness had been brought home to him. Benji noticed that his father's left hand was trembling like the hand of someone who had had a stroke.

He wrote another appeal for bail and signed a statement saying he would not participate in political activities.

He referred in no way, however, to his previous claim that the group he had belonged to had not beenea political organization and that he had not been a member of any illegal organization. He continued to request that he be admitted to the infirmary, and he met with the chief warden to find out whether it would be possible, if he were sent to prison, to serve his time in Tokyo or a nearby prefecturee

Benji was admitted to the infirmary. He learned that his illness, the name of which had been concealed from him, was tuberculosis, and that his weight had gone down to 98 pounds. One day, as he was picking up his vegetables with thin fingers, he called out in his heart to three or four friends, to his wife, to his father, to his sister; his chin trembled, and he burst into tears. "I haven't lost the faith! I haven't lost it!" he cried in a throttled voice and devoured his vegetablese[12] He felt fingers like strips of raw chicken touch his heart. The thought which had floated into his mind an hour ago, a thought which until then he had believed himself constitutionally incapable of--"Shall I recant? Shall I . . .?"--had disappeared. The instant that thought had crossed his mind, he felt his throat parch up. When lunch was brought around, he accepted it, but he could not eat a mouthful of the food which, until that morning, he had gobbled down hoping to make himself recover. He had no

desire for food at all, and the very thought that desire for food existed made him feel like vomiting. With cheeks like ice, Benji sat up in bed and gazed wildly around the room. Why had the thought disappeared? Saliva suddenly poured back into his mouth, tears tumbled out of his eyes, and his teeth chattered. "Let those whose life is secure . . . wear leaves in their hair, oh my lads!" The line ran through his mind.[13] "I, too, will die as a nightingale of Hellas."[14] Tears of joy welled up in his eyes.

"There is still some snow left inside the house." Another letter had come from his father. "Only in the fields has the snow melted. The mountains near and far are still pure white and when the wind blows even a little bit, no matter what the direction, it feels like one is being pelted with ice. The cold outside is severe.

"Since our village won't plant for another thirty days, we are not very worried. In Nishino and Katsumoto, however, where the snow is still abundant, the planting season begins about twenty days earlier than ours. Since they can't predict how the weather will develop, they've had to hire people in Nagoya to start seedlings for them. This is something completely unheard of in the past.

"People spoke of 1933 as the 'bumper harvest when everyone starved', but I'm afraid this year it will be the

oppositea-a true famine. Everyone is making such a clamor about it being an emergency that I wonder if a real disaster won't befall us as a punishment from the gods.

"This year we took all the necessary precautions during the snowy season, so fortunatelyathere was very little damage to our trees. You asked me about the pawlonia trees in your lettera Recently they've been able to import them quite cheaply from South China, India, and --in extreme cases--from Germany, and the price has fallen sharply. Since it seems to be a losing business now, this whole area has been replanted and there are hardly any pawlonias left. It used to be that in Japan, at least, the pawlonias from Hakusanshita in Kaga were prized for making hibachis. But even these are in a slump now.a Therefore, I had to cut down the pawloniasaon our land, too--except for onea which I left standing in accordance with the proverb, 'Never be without one green pawlonia'.

"The last time I was in Tokyo I acted as a go-between in the arrangements for Mr. Higuchi (Sada, the youngest son in the Higuchi family of Kameido, Tokyo) to come to the Tamachi branch of the family as an adopted son. The negotiations were concluded to the satisfaction of both sides, and today was the auspicious day when the telegram arrived saying that Sada was coming to Tamachi. Sada works at the police station andahas attained thea third rank in judo. Since he is specializing in it now,

they say that if he perseveres for two more years he can attain the fifth rank and become an instructor in the countryside. At any rate, I think things are going very well for him. Sugiuchi Yoshita, who finished his course at the science school a year ago, has just started teaching at a middle school around here. He, too, became an adopted son of a former samurai family in Hatakeyamae Motono Sōtarō's oldest son re-enlisted in the army and is now a sergeant-major. Magonojō's oldest son has also reenlisted. Both expect to return home as special sergeant-majors, which will certainly be quite a success for their families.

"This letter has gotten very long, so I'll stop here. Take care of yourself. (I still haven't received any word that your bail was rejected.)"

"Your letter of the 24th arrived here on the 27the I'm glad you are welle I've just sent in the application for your bail. Your father and mother are both well. Sada's family are all well. It's been warm lately and we're getting ready for the planting. The second son of Mr. Yamagata Kenichi, who was studying at a Higher School of Agriculture in Korea, died. Minoru, the nineteen year old male heir of the Sonoike family, was run over by a trolleye Fortunately, he has a good prospect for complete recovery after ten days of rest, so all are relieved.

But life never goes exactly as we want it to in this world.

"On the 25th we made a pilgrimage to Kamizaki. There were 25,000 pilgrims there the day we arrived and more than 50,000 by the 28th. So it doesn't look like the people of this area have turned their backs on the rice-coffers of Honganji yet.a[15]

"The double cherries are in blossom and the sight of them wet with morning dew is more beautiful than words can tell. Perhaps because it's been so cold this year, we've only twice heard a nightingale in the bamboo grove. We haven't seen a single skylark yet. The camellias around the house are at their peak.

"If you are going to be sent to prison in the near future, you should start preparing now. If you go in August, when the weather is gooda your body will make an easy adjustment. Still, since you won't have the same freedom in food and clothing that you had while the case was pendinga you should take every precaution. I'll stop writing here."

But Benji's condition continued to deteriorate. He was able to have visitors come to the infirmary. But when the time came for the verdict on the appeal to be handed down, he kicked away that part of himself which felt it was too cruel to ask, and decided to call his father to Tokyo one more time. His requests for a blood examination

and other treatment had been returned with a message expressing the view of the chief warden as well as the head doctor: "It is our practice to examine when disease breaks out."

A few misdelivered telegrams later, Benji saw his father for the second time. Once again, his left hand was trembling. (His father hid it in his kimono.) "Your father only expects to be around for ten more years, anye way." Benji was saddened by the way his father spoke, which was strikingly different from before. Compared to the time of his first trial, his father had suddenly aged, and the sound of his wooden geta dragging along on the floor seemed terribly unsteady.

Benji next met with the lawyer. The lawyer explained why Benji's application for bail and the statement he had written were considered "insufficient" for the granting of bail. He told Benji that enough evidence of his participation in an illegal organization had been gathered from the testimony of others for the court to consider it a proven fact; he went on to suggest that if Benji himself would admit to this fact it would be possible either to delay his sentence for two years or release him on bail. He showed Benji the names of several acquaintances who had already been released the year before because they had complied quickly. Benji knew about these people. He

knew there had been situations, after his organization had been declared illegal and disbanded, in which he, too, if he had maneuvered a little more shrewdly, might have done the same thing. Today, however, hearing his lawyer for the first time draw a contrast between himself and those others, he felt as if his mind was coming unhinged. Unhinged because he was aware that a new battle was taking place in his heart, yet at the same time he was aware that he was shielding himself from knowing what that battle was, shielding himself even from the awareness that he was shielding himself--when he thought of what lay at the end of the effort he was waging, almost unconsciously, on two, three, different levels, everything before his eyes went dark. "Isn't it useless to go onelike this?" Benji thought he detected such an innuendo in the lawyer's words, but he could not be sure if it was really there or if he were simply trying to pass responsibility off on the lawyer. Without giving any definite answer, he retreated from the room, as if to escape from the lawyer, who was suggesting that he "think it over" until the next day. But all that night he could not escape the knowledge that by not giving any definite answer he had, in fact, given a definite answere

The next day the lawyer arrived early in the morning. Benji informed him that he had decided to admit to the point in question. Tamino came to see him, apparently independently from the lawyer. Benji conveyed the same

information to her. Tamino, who in the beginning seemed not to follow what he was saying, turned pale halfway through the explanation. "I . . ." she blurted out, then bowed abruptly and left the room. Benji felt like some stray dog which suspiciously eyes the faces of people who reach out to stroke him before dashing away.

His request for deferment of his sentence was not granted. He received some medicine, both liquid and powdered. Wearing a white mask over his mouth, he was driven to the court in a specially ordered car.

He climbed the stairs of the courthouse putting both feet on every step. His lawyer informed the court that Benji's father had come to Tokyo. He asked once more for a deferment of the sentence; this time it was granted. Benji's father came forward, with faltering steps, to be a witness, and promised in awkward phrases to take responsibility for Benji after his recantation. Since it was planting time, and also because the jail was closed for a holiday, he went straight home without visiting Benji.

When the last day of the trial came, Benji was driven to court in the same fashion as before. On the way, in a moment when the car overtook a procession of primary school children, he felt an impulse so strong he had to cover his mouth with his hands. He felt that he would argue back at the judge when he was brought before him. Standing in the court, however, Benji was like an

empty hozuki pod.[16]

In the temporary detention center, Benji drank some liquid medicine and lay down for a long time. Enclosed by the black walls of the narrow room, he could hardly breathe. Scrawled all over the walls (although he could not read them clearly now in the darkness) were curses, words of attack directed at "the recanters." The sentence announced for him had been two years of hard labor, deferred for five years. Since the deferment began immediately, Benji left that very day. Catching sight of the faces of Tamino and Tsune coming to meet him, he checked the urge to flee with his bundle of possessions on his back.

He was taken to the room of a woman friend with whom Tamino had been staying. It was a four and a half mat room in a barrack-type apartment. After five or six visitors, people who had been released from jail earlier than himself, had come and gone, Benji, clasping his hands together, bowed his head low before Tamino and Tsune. But he was unable to tell them why, or for what, he was begging their pardon.

Adjæining the apartment on one side was a row of cheap boarding houses. What with radios, soot, the incessant noise of the people in the buildings, and the humid heat of early June, Benji sweat from the moment he opened his eyes in the morning as he lay in bed. The day

after his release from jail, an acquaintance who was a doctor examined him and tested his blood. There was a negative result on the blood tests, and he was told to go ahead and have his spinal fluid examined.

The small room grew more and more unbearable; Benji moved to the house of a friend in Ōmori. One day Tamino sent him a letter saying that she wanted to talk with him. Feeling extremely nervous, he met her, spoke briefly about what he had just been through, and explained his intentions for the future. The awareness that he was not being completely honest, however, dogged him. Tamino, without being fully convinced, accepted the explanation.

One day he received a telegram announcing that his father was coming to Tokyo. A benefactor of his who lived in Tokyo was dying and he wanted to be with him in his final hours. The sick man entered a crisis, and then unexpectedly rallied. Benji's father stayed in Tokyo for two nights, and then began urging Benji to come home with him for a while. He argued that Benji had not seen his mother in five years, that his relatives were all worried about him, that the climate at home would be better for his health than the heat of Tokyo (besides, Benji wasn't so sick he couldn't make a train trip), and that there were family matters he wanted to talk to him about. Benji felt tempted. For one thing, he was not able to look Tamino in the eyes these days. On the other hand, he had a sense

of danger about leaving Tokyo now. He discussed the matter with Tamino, who told him, "But obviously you want to go home. Then go aheadâ" He felt antagonized by her tone of voice. Knowing full well that it was his father's plan to persuade Benji first and then to have Benji work on Tamino, Benji decided to go back with him. "Takabatake Magozō, what a fool you are!" Tamino muttered under her breath. With these words ringing in his ears, Benji withdrew into his compartment.

The next day Benji saw his mother for the first time in five years. He went to say hello,aas custom required, to the families in the neighboring houses, and discovered upon his return, that four newspaper reporters had arrived. Magozō inquired courteously how they had learned about Benji. "That's our business . . .!" one answered. Since all the rooms in the house had been left open because of the hot weather, Benji could not avoid meeting the men.

"They say that you recanted. Is it true?"

"What was your motivation?"

"How do you see your future?"

In response to their questions, Benji answered thata it was true, that he had had various motives, and that for the present all he wanted to do was recover fromahis illness. He wanted neither to lie to them nor to lose control of himself because of the antagonism he felt toward one of their party, in particular. One of the reporters

brought his questions to an abrupt stop and stood up. The others followed. Benji realized the man had stopped because he felt sorry for him; he was humiliated. He told his mother, who was baffled by the entire situation, that it was nothing to worry about.

Benji heard his father's voice coming across the fields. Magozō came into the house, accompanied by a man wearing a yukata and a straw sailor hat.

"From Satokubo." With these two words Benji was given to understand that the man was from the local police station. Benji could not tell whether the policeman knew the particulars of his case or not; at any rate, his way of addressing Benji was incredibly courteous. Relations between the local police and the villagers were usually like this.

The next morning Benji was awakened by the sound of Magozō shrilly clearing his throat. It was Magozō's habit, spring, summer, and autumn, to rise while it was still dark (particularly after he had gotten older) and do his weeding before having breakfast. That evening, drinking a small bottle of sake, he was in high spirits and talked to Benji of this and that. He told Benji their prefecture had spent heavily on staging special maneuvers. He described how the people in a neighboring village had been thrilled that troops would be passing through on their way to Manchuria--but were now hard pressed to produce the

outlays of food they were expected to serve to the soldiers, especially to the commanding officers. He told him about the rayon factory which had been built, and which was changing the face of the village.a

The next day Magozō took the day off and went with Benji to Sada's home. That night, again, he had his evening drink and talked. He said he could see nothing wrong with forming a Communist Party in Japan. But even if, for example, you brought a man like Lenin here, he wouldn't have the same appeal for the Japanese people as their own Emperor. The next day they went to visit the in-laws of Tomi, who had died. At night Magozō drank and talked as usual. There was one comment he never failed to make. "I'm thinking about fixing this house up,a' he would say. "Your grandfather, before he passed away, only cared about having lots of trees around the house. But me . . a I'd like to make this look like a house a writer was born in!" Then Magozō would laugh loudly. Benji never knew what to answer--it was as if he could glimpse the decline of his father's mental faculties in these words. Magozō, moreover, seemed toaseek a kind of consolation in them. Benji remembered how, when his brother Kōta had taken out a life insurance policy at his grandfather'sa urging, Magozō had written all the way from Korea to demand that he stop wasting money on such foolishness. When thea house had become badly rundown and their grandfather had

wanted to build a new, smaller one, Magozō had opposed him, insisting that what they needed was "a house as big as a primary school." Yet not long ago, that same Magozō had become the village insurance agent. Benji recalled a dream he once had about his father in middle-school. He had dreamt he saw Magozō carefully making specimens of plants, and the realization that even his father had to seek distraction in such activities woke Benji up. Now, confronted with Magozō talking about a "house fit for a writer" in waking reality, Benji could only sit in silence.

Magozō went on this way for about a week, but the "family matters" he had mentioned in Tokyo never came up. Benji was half fearful of hearing what Magozō had to say, and half eager to get it out on the table, once and for all. Since his temperature was holding at 99ß, he began to do some translation work to earn a little money. But today he had come to a stop on the line: "Ein Trojanowski und seine Frau werde ich betreffs ihres Wunsches, sie wieder zu sehen, schreiben. Das ware wirklich schōn." He suspected that there was a printing error; that "ihres" should be "Ihres" and "sie" should be "Sie," but with his level of linguistic ability, it was impossible to judge.

Kuma, carrying a pot in her hand, had begun to walk toward the dimly lit sink in the kitchen. "Hey, you!" Magozō called to her back. "Will you get out of here for a while? I have some things to talk to Benji about."

"Eh?" Kuma set down the pot with a bang. Benji glanced at his father's face, but his father was looking in the direction of his mother. "What is it?" Kuma, her back still turned to Magozō, asked desperately. "Somethin' I'm not supposed to hear?" Magozō glared back in silence, with a fierce expression in his eyes. Then, as if chasing something away, he took a big gulp of tea and announced, in a voice so deadly he could have devastated Kuma with a single word, "Yes, it's something you're not supposed to hear. So I'm asking you to leave."

Magozō turned back to Benji, seemingly unruffled, and asked him to bring over the sake bottle. Benji fetched the bottle that Kuma had been preparing to bring. Kuma let her skirt down and went out the door into the darkness. Benji wondered if she had some place to go, or if she would just squat outside the door, waiting. "Now you're going to drink up tonight," Magozō said, filling Benji's cup until it almost overflowed. "It's not that I mind your mother staying. No, it would be better if she stayed. But she just doesn't understand." Benji listened. "Besides, I have some things to say I've never told your mother."

"I guess you know something about the family matters from my letters. The first time you were arrested, it wasn't too bad. But in the last two and a half years your father has really had to endure a lot."

"Yes," Benji muttered and took a swallow of sakee

"First Tomi died. I felt very sorry for her, but no matter how sorry you feele it won't stop a person from dying. Tsune nursed her wonderfully. The trouble was that Tsune and I didn't see eye to eye. When the baby was born, Tomi had no milk.e Tsune wanted to give her cow's milk. I looked into the matter, and decided we should give her rice broth. I'm sure you know all about this, but when it comes to the cows around this area, you can't tell what you're giving a child. They're Nonogami cows, that's the problem. I had a good, long talk with Mr. Takai about it, so I know. But then Tsune went around saying the baby died because it didn't have cow's milk. No matter how many times I tried to explain it to her, she wouldn't listen. The worst of it was that she claimed it was all because I didn't want to spend the money. I couldn't very well get angry at her, though, even when she said a thing like that. Anyway, the baby died. Tomi died. Then Tsune caught it. The doctor said it wasn't a very bad case, but you know how Tsune carries one She told everyone she was going to die, just like Tomi. Somehow we got through that. The next thing was my teethe But we got through that, too.

"Then it was you. At first I didn't tell your mother about it. But it's wrong to keep a person in the dark forever. Besides, it wasn't the kind of thing you

could hide very well. She found out about it. I didn't ask who told her at the time; I just assumed she had gotten wind of it from somewheree Well, she heard what she heard, but since I wasn't talking about it, she didn't ask me a thing. Still, I had been thinking the whole thing overe And even if she hadn't heard about it, I would have told here When it came right down to it, I knew it was the kind of thing you had to tell a person. So I did. That was in autumn, the year before last.

"And that was nearly the end of mee She felt so ashamed to be seen by the other people in the village she refused to go outsidee Now a person may not want to go outside--it's all the same to me--but if farming is your business, if you don't go outside you can't do it. I told her she had nothing to be ashamed of, but she didn't get the point. She doesn't even try to get the point, so it's hopeless. But the funny thing is, every once in a while she'll figure it out. She'll get it all figured out and then, bang, the next thing you know she forgets it again. She says I didn't bring you up right."

Magozō took another gulp of sake, and refilled Benji's empty cup. "There's nothing wrong with the way I brought you up. Right or wrong, call it what you want, I didn't make any mistakes. Now you know what happened in Kōta's case. When he decided to get married, he had to have a country geisha. You could have searched the

streets beating a drum and not come up with a bride as good as that one. No, you don't find women like that every day, but unfortunately, life isn't so simple as far as society is concerned. Well, what had to be had to be. Your dead uncle wanted it that way, so we scraped together the money to buy her out. And then what happened? Before the year was out, Kōta came down with cholera. All the way up there in Vladivostok. You came to Tsuruga then, so you know about it. Still, it wasn't something I could cry over. All the people in the village were telling me how sorry they were. But you can be sure there were some who were smiling inside. You may not know it yet, but that's how farmers are. One man's loss is the next man's gain, and you rejoice over it. It's been that way for generations and it's not going to change. I know just how they feel. That's why it won't change.

"And what about yourself? You managed to get all the way to higher school and then you failed a grade. Not once, but twice. I decided I better go have a talk with your teacher, Nojima-sensei. His older brother and I used to be friendly when we were in the army, you see. Nojima-sensei told me you weren't dumb, you just didn't want to study. He said he could tell from reading your exams. You only answered the questions you were interested in. If it was a question you liked, you'd write down things even the teacher didn't know. If it was something

you knew a little bit about, but the question bored you, you wouldn't bother to answer it at all. You just pleased yourself. I had a short talk with you about this at the time, but I never said a word about your getting left back. I heard of people who failed the higher school entrance exam twice, you see. And I figured that getting in and failing a grade was better than not getting in at all, so I just kept quiet about it. Now this is something else I never mentioned to you, but all that time I saw to it that you had your spending money. I don't know what they do in good families,abut the people I know make their children keep an account book. That's the way they are about everything. But not me. Because I don't believe in that kind of thing. I never had much education, and all your learning is beyond mea but that's my way.

"Now your mother and all of them are saying I didn't bring you up right. I guess that's how your mother is--whatever it is, as long as she can pass the blame off on me, she can find some peace of mind. So there's no helping it. But then sheastarted her whimpera ing. Thatås when my nerves gave out. I told you about it. Telling you about it was easy enough, but the real thing was hell. You said to take her to the temple. I tried, but she refused to go. She was probably right. If they're giving three sermons, you can be sure one will

be a diatribe against the Communists. Now I don't know much about communism. I don't know very much, but when I listen to those pious idiots talk I realize even I know more than they do. Why a beggar earns his living better than those priests! All they know how to do is talke But your mother's a woman, you know.e Hearing all that was just too much for her. There was nothing I could do. I came up with the idea of putting a mat-floor in the storehouse. That's the way it happened.

"Usually when people come to visit, they'll ask, 'How's your son managing in Tokyo these days?' But when they come to this house, they wonét even mention your name. The relatives wonét say a word about youe Thatés what Kuma said would happen, and she was right. I, for one, can't blame them. Who could ask us such a question? You know the way people take satisfaction in their children's achievements--this one's son joined the police force and is teaching judo, that one's son reenlisted in the army and is becoming a special sergeant-major . . . If you ask me, I can't see whatés so great about all that. Still, your mother would like them to talk about our son. But what is there to talk about?e She can't accept that, though. Even if she understood the reasons for it, she'd still feel lonely when no-one talks about you. This is something I really want you to understand.

"Well, so much for that. Now let me tell you about

the property. By property, of course, all I mean is a few rice fields. Altogether we have about five acres. If you subtract the land the house is on, that's enough to produce about fifty sacks of rice. Rice sells for 8 yen a sack. Do you think we can survive on that? Then we have a debt at the money-lenders, Yamazakiás, for 2,000 yen. We owe 2,000 to the bank. What we owe in small sums here and there comes to about 1,000 yen. That's 5,000 yen in all. This is after I paid off as much as I could of the debts left by your grandfather.

"As for the new debts, well, we managed to get Tsune married alright, but for Tomi's marriage we had to borrow a thousand yen. Sada's marriage was another thousand. Prices had gotten very high, but we had no choice. Then Tomi took sick. I think in most places the husband's family provides money at times like that. But the custom here is for the wife's family to do it, so what could I do? I mean, if it's something good, I'm not against coming up with a new way of doing things. But in a situation like this, where what she had was tuberculosis and the baby had already died, I just had to let custom be custom. Then there were Tsune's living expenses. I'm sending her money now behind youramother's back. I feel so sorry for her I have to do it. But to Tsune it doesn't seem to mean a thing. It's not that I want her to feel obligated to me. But how can she get along in life with an attitude like that?

"So, if you want to know how much it all comes to with the principal and the interest added in, I figure if I paid one yen a day it would take me fifteen years to pay it all off. Now I've made some calculations. We have 5,000 yen in debts, but we've also loaned out some money. 600 yen to Hirazuka's and 600 yen to Kitazawa's. The thing about these is thatą although I'm sure they'll be paid back some day, I wouldn't dream of taking a penny of interest on them. Not only that, I canåt even urge them to pay the money back. They're the kind of people who would run to me the minute they could scrape it together, thatås why. Then there's my pension. That's 360 yen a year, 30 yen a month, no more no less. Taxes, with one thing and another, come to 300 yen, and I wouldnåt count on them getting any lower.

"But I haven't finished with the expenses yet. There were some special cases. I had to handle them the same old way. First, you asked meą and I had wanted to see you anyway, so I went down to Tokyo. That's 750 miles both ways. How could I come up with the money for that? I took the clock to the pawnshop. Itås an old model, but the gold is supposed to be very good. The gold was worth a lot, but all I got for it was 90 yen. I had to borrow another 50 yen from Yamazaki's. The next time I went down, it was because my benefactor was sick. This, too, was a special case and I had an obligation to go. I

borrowed another 30 yen from Yamazaki's. That makes 170 yen borrowed in half a year. In addition to the 5,000 yen I already told you about. Then, the last time we went to Sada's, what with train fare for two people, presents, and everything else, it came to 10 yen. At Otae-sanås funeral I made an offering of 10 yen. Even the kagura dancers will make faces at you if you don't give them 10 sen when they come around!

"What we'll make on the crops in any one year can never be predicted. No-one wants to understand that, though. Tsune doesn't say things like this all the time, but every once in a while she'll tell me, "Otottsan, it's all your doing that we came into the world, now you take care of usá" She doesn't understandaa thing. I thought I would try to sell some land. Well, I told you all about the situation in my letter. I couldn't sell a bit. I should have known better. Whoever buys it will only lose money on it. Your mother's reaction was something else again. I tried to tell her. She listened to me, and for three days she didnåt say a word. On the fourth day she told me that as long as she had eyes in her head, I better not sell that land. That was all. She knows very well there's no other way to pay off that debt, but she won't let it out of her hands. We have nothing else to fall back on. But Kuma just wants to hold on to what she's got, even if she's losing money on

it. So there's nothing I can do. On this subject, she won't listen to a word I say.

"You know what they do in other families? As soon as the children finish primary school, they go out and work in the factory. They say the work in rayon isn't that dependable, but at least some cash comes in month by month. That's a big help. But in this house the money just keeps going out and there's nothing coming in. As hard as I try, there just doesn't seem to be much two old folks like us can do."

Magozō sipped his sake and then took a big gulp. Benji sipped mechanically.

"And then what happened . . .? You recanted. I wasn't planning to go to Tokyo then. But you sent me a telegram saying it was absolutely necessary that I be there. It said, "Details later," so I waited for a letter, but it never arrived. Well, that's the way life is. There I was wondering what to do when another telegram comes saying, "Leave for Tokyo today." I was working out in the fields. Kuma brought it to me with her face as pale as death. She goes white at the very sight of a telegram. So, anyway, I left as soon as I received it. I keep telling myself there must be other people who have gone through bad times like this at my age, but I really wonder. Before I got in to see you, there was a meeting. Between Tamino, Tsune, and myself. Tamino begged me to do

whatever I could to get you out of jail. That's where Tamino's weak. Of course, she's been splendid all through thise She was splendid, but this was her failinge She begged me to get you out of jail, any way I could. She said I was the only person who could do it. You see, she didn't say she would try to do it herself, she wanted to leave it all to someone else. Well, they say even a great man like Socrates had his failings. He had a pail of cold water thrown at him by his wife, I've heard tell.e[17]

"Last summer things didn't get any better. There was a fire in Osaka, and Tamino told me her relatives' house was burnt to the ground. I thought as your father I should send a letter of sympathy. They never wrote back. I sent out another letter, and I wrote the address just the way Tamino told me toe Not a line as to whether it arrived or not. I was hoping I could give them just a little help if I heard from them, but that's all there was to thate

"Now Tsune likes to have her own way in things and she won't live in the same house with us. What is goinge to become of her if that's how she is? She and Tamino bothe But that's why, when we heard you recanted, even your mother almost fell over with shocke Suddenly everything you had done seemed like a game, a silly game . . . completely worthless. Takeshita and those others bore

themselves well. It was wrong to kill them, but they're better off that waye But you--now everything you've ever written might as well be crossed out. There I was, trying to explain your life, trying to educate your mother, who had been driven crazy by the whole thinge Even the relatives, although they'd never say so, were surprised at you. You made a big mistake. I don't care what you did before, this was wrong. And whatever good you may have done only makes it worse. No-one should do a thing like that. If you think about it, you'll see I'm right. Think of the way you stood up, like a leader, telling people what to do. Look at Gorō, down here at the mill--when he killed his own child he served his full time for it. But the blood of other people's children is on your hands, and your crime is even worse than murder.

"You can call them the bourgeoisie, or whatever you want, but there are lots of people in this world with far more character than you have. Look what happened to Tokoyama. He joined the Seiyūkai, so now he can become Prime Ministere[18] But anyone with any understanding--and these are politicians I'm talking about, mind you--won't have a thing to do with the man. The only ones who can show him any respect after that are the ones who are toadying up to him. He may become Prime Minister, but he gave up his basic human decency. As clever as he is, what is it worth if he isn't human? I don't care how much

of a scholar or a writer a person is, without good character all those achievements are as empty as bubbles. When we heard you were arrested, we tried to put all the family matters in order on the assumption that you would be returned to us dead. We were prepared to receive your bones fromethe execution ground at Kozukagahara."

Magozō cleared his throat and drank some sake. Benji reflexively put his cup to his lips.

"Well," Magozō asked after a pause. "Just what are your plans, anyway? What are you going to do with yourself after this?"

Benji didn't answer.

"As far as your father is concerned, youecan give up on being a writer."

Benji still said nothing.

"Now I havenėt read anythėng myself, but I hear Wajima and some others wrote books to justify recanting. What's the purpose of that? And if that question has to be asked, why do they write at all? If you care about the honesty of what you wrote before, if you want it to live, stop writing today. There's nothing you can write now without killing what you wrote before.

"I realize you have to get your health back. But then you should become a farmer. You won't be the first person who's had to learn farming after thirty. Why doesn't Tamino want to work in the fields? What's wrong

with her? You know the situation now in detail. We're 5,000 yen in debt. Still, I think we could manage somehow to produce enough to eat. If we can't eat, what does it matter? If you can't eat, you beg. These are the matters in which you should educate your wife. And this is the path of life that you, as heir to this house and successor to the family line, should follow.é'

Benji remained silent.

Magozō took another drink of sake.

"Think it over. Throw away your writing and save yourself. I hear the writer Satomi went off to be a day-laborer. Maybe he's a different case, but there's a man of principle! A man who does things all the way. Try doing some hard labor yourself. If something you wanted to write was born out of that, I would respect it. I'm not asking you to go that far. But if you want to save yourself as a human being, you should stop for at least five to eight years. That's your fatheres opinion. I'm not an educated man, but I don't think I'm the only one who thinks this way. I'm sure anyone would agree. I've learned this much in seventy years of life.é'

Benji felt that many things had become clear. The impact of his way of life on the tangled threads of thee relationships within his own family . . . on the relationship between his family and others . . . his narrowmindedness . . . his father's misinterpretation of Taminoés

words in Tokyo--in all of it he saw the reflection of his act of betrayal. Yet try as he might to dispel Magozō's misunderstanding, he would never be able to touch it at its source. It was all as his father had said. The realization that he, who had sensed so keenly his responsibilities to Tamino, Tomi, and scores of comrades in the movement, had not felt the same sense of responsibility toward his father, was unbearably painful to him.

"So what are you going to do?"

But Benji did not knowe He only knew that if hee gave up his writing now, it would all be over for him. He thought he could explain his position logically enough,e but not to his fathere He felt somehow as if he were caught in a trap. He was ashamed of having this feelinge Yet he also saw the feeling as a kind of proof that he was not ashamed of himself. Still, Benji was determined, when he felt something, not to try to pass one feeling off as another without examining it. It was a principle he had reflected on deeply over the last two and a half years, and throughout the experience of the dissolution of his organization. Perhaps, he thought, he was a man totally without a sense of shame. He would still not deny toe himself that what he felt was a trap was a trape Because if that feeling were destroyed, it would truly be the end. Yes, by his very nature, in some way other people would never understand, he was an utterly shameless human being,

he told himself, and felt a vague, stupid loneliness. In answer to his fatherės question, he said, "I understand everything you've said. But I want to keep on writing."

"I see," said Magozō. His voice emanated a contempt almost too great for words.

For a while the two sat without speaking. Benji thought that his answer to his father was the correct one. But it was correct for here and now; whether it would continue to be correct or not, time alone would tell. He had not the slightest confidence in himself. He felt rather drunk, and dazed with exhaustion.

Benji sighed, but Magozō appeared to have utterly lost interest in the conversation. His face was drawn; his enormous eyes were sunk deep behind his eyelids. It began to dawn on Benji how mercilessly he had driven his old father in his egotism and greed. Truly it had been egotism and greed, an egotism and greed so powerful he had trampled his parents, his sister, and his wife underfoot. Quietly, a sense of revulsion for himself welled up inside him.

There was a sound of footsteps outside and buck-toothed Kuma slunk in through the door like a cowering cat. Benji felt irritated that she had chosen this moment to return. But beyond this he could think of nothing. "I

was over to Taguchi's. He says you better just as well keep that present you got for the insurance," Kuma said, timorously approaching the table.

Five Cups of Sake

I'm sorry you weren't home when I called, but perhaps it was better. If I had seen you, I probably wouldn't be writing this to you. Had we sat and talked, I think our conversation would have rambled. Parts of my brain seem to have gone senile in the past few years, and my attention is apt to wander. Also, something in the atmosphere of a reunion after many years powerfully affects old friends. By writeng, I hope I can ward that off just a bit. What is written usually speaks for itself.e

I don't even know where to begine Could I ever write all of it? Could I ever even tell you all of it? I plan to add a note at the end sayeng "to be conteenued.e" Even if I forget, I want you to bear in mind while you read that this letter will have no conclusion. I bitterly regret it, but I have to begin with that request.

Bitterness, bitterness. Really, I think I've become a bitter old man. Bitter about what? It seems to tinge everything: my family's faces, my students' faces when I look out over them, the first half of my life . . . I can't think of any of it without feeling bitter. I always thought I knew what it meant when people talked about "ugly old age," but I never gave any thought to when it began. It must be when one begins to feel bitterness. I shouldn't say the first half of my life. It's two thirds. Even four-fifthse And bitterness is what appears in this last one-third, last one-fifth, when Ie

look back on what's gone before. Who was it that said, "At seventeen, all of France dangled before my eyes?" Nothing dangles before me any longer, but it's not bitterness over the irretrievable past that I feel. It's a bitterness about the future, about what is yet to come. It's a faintness of heart that I feel when I peer into the years that stretch ahead of me like a cylinder, years following the one when I first felt bitterness, when day and night I choked in a bitterness that enveloped me like mist.

You probably don't know this, but once long ago I tried to become a member of the New Man Society. I was never accepted. The student who was supposed to introduce me had second thoughts about it when he discovered my father was a police chief. Instead of refusing me directly, he avoided me. Although nothing had been made clear, I sensed that I had been rejected and abandoned my effort. In the years that followed I went on to become a teacher, won the respect of my students, assumed the responsibilities of a principal . . . any day now I may find myself purged.[1a] In my case, the secretary of the New Man Society probably made a mistake. But what was it that made me go on, even in the face of my sense of rejection, to become a school teacher? Sense of rejection--what a fool I was then! And here I am stamping my feet with rage when I think of the fifteen years I have left.

To tell you the truth, I have no desire to be like the parents, the teachers, or the principals we knew in our youth. I hate the way they understood us, gave us their words of advice, and watched us go off, waving with heart-felt emotion from the window. I wanted to go out into life with my students, if I had to crawl on my hands and knees to do it. But I would rather beat the drum for them; I would walk at the head of the line. As a teacher I read Rousseau, Frebel, Pestalozzie I studied American education, Soviet education, I even turned to figures from our own past: Nakae Tōjū, Yamaga Sokō, Yoshida Shōine[2] Out of all of that what remained with me to the end was the image of the tutor, X., in a novel by Kolorenko. I've forgotten the novel's title, and it may not even have been by Kolorenko, but by Gertzen. Whatever, this tutor was a German youth, a wanderer, who had made his way to Russia. There, in the unique, half-Asiatic atmosphere of the Russian court, the young German of humble birth gave his whole heart to the teaching of children, and the children, in turn, adored him. He instructed them in the European culture he had carriede with him, although he was ridiculed and treated like a pariah all the while by the nobles of the court. Teacher and pupils became companions in learning, but just when this teacher-pupil, student-to-student relationship was

about to reach an even higher plane, one morning, the tutor fled. "I have instructed you as far as I could within the limits of my abilities. There is nothing more I can give you. I am going someplace else." He left this note and fled empty-handed. How I was struck by the beauty of this act! I, too, wanted to give my students whatever I had, and then flee. As a teacher, that German youth was a figure I saw constantly moving into the distance ahead of me. I realize now that my good reputation with my students owes much to his influence.

And what happened? Today I pity the naive young man who strove to carry out those ideals. To say simply that I could not give all, that circumstances would not permit it, would be an understatement. When I realized I would not be allowed to give all, I tried to give four-fifths. When I realized I could not give four-fifths, I tried to give one half. When that, too, was impossible, I tried to give one-third, then one-fourth, then one-fifth. In the end, I struggled to give anything, anything at all, that I, myself, could give. I shudder when I think of it. When I thought I was giving four-fifths, wasn't the other one-fifth being given by someone else? When I thought I was giving one-half, or one-third, wasn't the other one-half, or one-third, being given by someone else? And when I thought that, whatever it was that I gave, I had at least given something, anything, of

myself, wasn't, in fact, all of it being given by someone else? At any rate, I lived to see the day--ah, war! war!a-when all was being given by others. "To give all and flee": the way of life I was destined to was just the reverse.

There was one thing I could do. I could teach my students that it was incorrect to give the Japanese reading yuku (to go) to the Chinese character sei (征, to conquer), which appears in compounds like seibatsu (征a伐, conquest) or shussei (出征, departing for battle). (English classes had been forbidden by that time, so I occasionally looked in on the Japanese grammar class.) And when the compound ōshō (応召, to respond to ana order) gained popularity and would appear in students' compositions to mean "answer an induction notice," I could tell them that to use the passive form was incorrect, that the word ōshō could only be used in the active form. If they wanted to use the passive voice, the correct word was shōshū.[3] Yet even in this I was utterly defeated when a young teacher of Japanese grammar who had long accepted my principle was inducted anda calling out, "Mr. Principal, sir," stopped me the night I was leaving his farewell party. Even then he upheld my theory. He simply asked if just this once, for his own sake, he could be permitted to give the character sei (to conquer) the reading yuku (to go). There, on the hedge-

lined street darkened to pitch black by the war-time lights-out regulations, I discovered a self that had ceased to feel shock when someone addressed me as "Mr. Principal, sir." Instead of asking him to spare me, at the very least, that form of address, I granted his request.

I wanted to talk to someone about all of this; I wanted someone, anyone, to understand. When Yoshiko came here after she lost her home in the bombing, I chose her. But I never went through with it. We heard the news about Saipan on the radio. I still had some hope that he might be alive, but to this sister of mine who would stand her three children up against the wall, showing how their heads made a diagonal line, I no longer had the heart to talk. (We soon learned definitely of her husband Tamaki's death. In the spring of 1944 he had been transferred back from the Soviet-Manchurian border. He had spent almost a month in Tokyo, but he had been unable to visit anyone, including Yoshiko. He departed from Yokohama for Saipan. Off Okasawara, the ship was bombed, and of seven hundred men aboard four hundred were saved and sent out again for Saipan. Tamaki was among these. Recently, one of the four out of that four hundred who survived was kind enough to visit us. Yoshiko says Tamaki told her all about you. She sends her regards. She's working her fingers to the bone, but her income is negligible. For whatever reasons, although all three children are living here with her, the

Tamaki family gives her almost no financial assistance. At Yoshiko's initiative, and because I was getting worried about the whole situation, I tried to find some work for her the last time I was in Tokyo. Now, you know the kind of man Tamaki was. I'm not saying this just because he was my brother-in-law, but he was one of a very small number of people who published some good books during the war. I don't even think it would be inappropriate to mention this on his grave. Recently I've noticed Yoshiko studying the advertisements in the newspaper. She sits there, poring over the advertisements from the publishing companies, and then, struggling to keep her face composed, rushes out to the back of the house through the kitchen door. It seems that in the pastaYoshiko had stayed out of Tamaki's business affairs. aAfterahe was drafted she sold the businessaat his direction--this was how they ate. Of course, I know Yoshiko's hardships are no worse than anyone else's, but I do want to see her through the anger and regret she must feel, witnessing this liberalization in publishing that Tamaki never lived to see.)

But my greatest failure came when, soon after the night I just mentioned, our school began to train students to fly gliders. Once that young instructor of grammar "went,a' I was completely beaten. I suppose various things contributed to my defeat. I didnat even have the fight that was left in me the time I saw you on my way

home from Uchihara. At Uchihara, I fought for all I was worth. I fought the prefectural officials and I fought the Ministry of Education. I "exhausted the monkey's wiles,"[4] as the saying goes, without scruple, to save my students, boys who were too young even to be called youths, from the quota lists of the Naval Academy and the Special Attack Corps training schools.[5] But now I was beaten, even the wiles of a monkey were of no avail.

One clear day the gliders began to fly. The aviation instructor had finished all of his inspections, and he called something out to me as I walked by. These days I harbor absolutely no antagonism toward former military instructors; even at that time I don't think I felt very much. "How about a go at it?" the instructor called out in a teasing tone. I stopped and confronted him. This man and I had been working at cross purposes for quite some time. Teaching develops an almost physical sensation of protectiveness for children in their early adolescence. I had been working at cross purposes to this man in my attempts to keep my students from being taken away. Today, I can't insist that what I did then was in no way related to the provocation of his words. But I know that at the time, at least, he was not speaking out of any grudge he bore me, nor did I respond to his words as if to a challenge. I acted quite spontaneously. The instructor, too, although he was somewhat unnerved by what I did,

pretended it was all very natural.

I flew. Fearlessly. I was ready to die. I don't mean that I was trying to die. But I was not afraid of death. In truth, this was partly from ignorance. But while I flew I was supremely happy.a Clouds, hills, river banks: it was a world of beautiful color. Yah!á Fly!!a Onwardá! (and don't these words really mean, "To our deaths!") It was a type of pure self-indulgence. I flew through the sky with my mind blank; there was nothing tragic, not the slightest sense of responsibility, in my actions. Then came the terrible result.a The students who were watching me thrilled with wordless excitement. Their excitement, as they stood there hushed with awe, camea blasting toward me with a force that made my eyes dry up in their sockets. The "spirit of a jewel shattering"-- the dry, crackling sound of those words noa one uses any more reverberated through my body and left it smarting.[6] Those small bodies, those spirits I could hold in the palm of my hand, had been completely indoctrinated. To make matters worse, at about that time my oldest daughter began insisting that she wanted to go to work in the Toyohashi naval plant, and there was no way I could stop her.

Bitterness, bitterness. Sometimes I feel so much bitterness I don't know where it ends. To prove my point, I'm sending you this letter by registered mail. After the way I was pushed back and forth between the town hall and

Office of Operations (a typically useless, pompous word!) for Veterans Families, when I tried to settle Yoshiko's affairs, I vowed I would send every last postcard by registered mail. At first the young women in the post office looked at me with wonderment. A middle school principal who sends even postcards by registered mail! But in the last half year their barely suppressed giggles have stopped. Instead, their eyes register their displeasure, their faces express the awareness that I am deliberately creating a nuisance. There is contempt, a small hatred, the tolerant pity one extends to the mentally deficient. As for me, I can get my satisfaction without provoking them to anything more. After all, my first daughter is now older than they are. Yes, these days everything reminds me of my age. Travelling utterly exhausts me. Even Tokyo seems far away. Laugh at me, if you want to, but I've reached that time in life when I can't keep my mind from filling up with useless details: what so-andeso was doing, what position he occupied by what age, and on and on. If I were comparing myself to people of consequence, I suppose it wouldn't be so bad.

But then, bitterness is bitterness. I would do anything I could to be liberated from it. I've made a resolution to make a resolution. That's why I went to your house that day, to talk and to exchange opinions. Tonight I drank the last five ounces of the special sake ration

given us to celebrate the new constitution. I got a little drunk. You know I never was much of a drinker. I really didn't enjoy it greatly when we used to go drinking as students. I never had any strong desire to drinke Now I do. I truly for sake. I used to find it hard to understand the scene in The Broken Commandment where the broken-down, alcoholic school teacher sniffed the fumes of the warmed-up sake.[7] Now I do, I emphathize. The vapor that momentarily floats around the mouth of the bottle and disappears . . . I inhale it and tiny particles invade my nostrils. The insides tingle with anticipation, just like his did. And this broken-down school teacher has also acquired a tasteefor massages. When a professional is not available, I have my youngest daughter trample my back. But there are times when even this fails to satisfy me and I find myself wishing for moxa.[8] "Drinke but donet let drink drink you," they say, but I long for the opposite, I want to be swallowed up. When I think of my life as a teacher, life during the war, the death of my first wife, my seconde marriage, the children who are growing up, Tamaki's death, and Yoshiko's . . . what can I call it??? the word for a married woman "coming back home" means that her husband is still alive[9] . . . the way her shoulders and hips are as stiff as stones, I think of this and I ask for the sake. Out of the utterly prosaic misery that comes with age, and from which there is no

relief, I beg for my sake: give me my sake and let me fall asleep.

Real connoisseurs may have other ways of drinking, but this is my way. And, although some sense of the responsibilities (if such they can be called) of my position prevents me from joining the lines of people who stand at cheap little bars in the street, as I turn my face away from them, losers in the battle of life who stand there without any sense of propriety or shame, I identify with them. The other day I remembered a ballad that was popular in my village when I was a boy. It was a song children sang.

Sparrow, sparrow
Why do you perch there?

Because my tummy's empty,
I'm perched here.

If your stomach's empty
Go plant a rice field!

If I plant a rice field,
I'll get dirty!

If you get dirty,
Wash yourself off!

If I wash myself off,
I'll float away.

If you float away,
Catch onto a reed.

If I grab a reed,
My hands will get cut.

If your hands get cut,
Sprinkle flour on them.

If I sprinkle flour on them,
The flies will come.

If the flies come,
Blow them off!

If I blow them off,
I'll get cold.

If youère cold,
Stand by the fire.

If I make a fire,
I'll be too hot.

If youère too hot,
Stand back a little.

If I stand back,
I'll be by myself (this is how we said,
"I'll be lonely.")

If youère by yourself,
Drink some sake.

If I drink some sake,
I'll get drunk.

If you get drunk,
Go to sleepe

If I go to sleep,
The rats will get me,
If I stay awake,
The hawk of the night will come.

I wonder who composed these versese "If youère by yourself, drink some sake!" If youère lonely drink some sake. I wonder if this is a song about the Japanese family.

My youngest child--I adore her--is the child of my second wife. I never told you this before, butemy second wife is my first wife's younger sister. My first wife died, leaving me two daughters; after I married heresister I tried to avoid having another child. When I learned one

was on the way, I was torn between the desire for a son and the sense that it might be better not to have one.[10] Fortunately, the child was a girl, and the part of me that had been hoping for a boy found consolation in the fact that I could adore this girl child without any sense of guilt. Recently, for the first time, I've even been able to talk about these feelings with my wife. Ah, I want to truly love my wife. All the more so because she is my second wife. The children of the first wife, and their father, should gather together around the second wife and speak fondly of their memories of their mother. Pity the fathers, the mothers, and the children who must carry such a burden! "If you're by yourself, drink some sake!" . . . and what is it like in your family?

Recently I can't seem to tear my eyes away from those dark patches of skin that every Japanese woman seems to have on her feet, those callouses just beneath the ankle bones that come from sitting on the floor. Girls who have not reached late adolescence don't seem to have them. They first appear when a young woman makes her preparations to become a bride, they are fully formed with marriage and motherhood. My first wife had them. So does my second. My daughters do not. Would I could prevent them from forming, even if it were my daughters alone I could spare! And if I am helpless to change them, then let me soothe and stroke the callouses on the feet of

my wife, on the feet of all the women in Japan. Bruises that sum up the misery of your lives. Knowing myself, a man, to be the source of those callouses, instinctively I ask for the sake.

Still, the way my wife and I can talk about our latest child opens up a whole new world. It is no small accomplishment. We probably won't have other children, but even if, by some chance, we were to have a son, I think I could feel completely at ease loving him. "If you're by yourself, drink some sake!" A man getting on in years and a woman with her callouses fully formed must find fresh love for each other. Let them not be resigned to their dissatisfactions with each other. When a woman is past forty, a man close to fifty, when the fold of skin at the base of the coccyx has become discolored and grey, then, more than ever, let them demand again and again of each other.

There's something I've been wanting to ask you. In our school, as in most others, a Communist Youth League was formed a while back. Observing it, I can't help feeling apprehensive. I didn't feel this way at the beginning. When the Communist Party was legalized and the debate on the Emperor system began, my students who were at the middle of the class suddenly began using their brains. These simple, unsophisticated students-by no means stupid--were the ones who had been turned into idiots

during the war. Tick, tick . . e it was as if the hands on the face of the watch had started moving again. I don't mean that their grades improved, but their ability to think did. One day a debate developed between teachers and students over the question of forming a student council in each class. The two sides clashed. The students maintained that they wanted to form their councils independently. The teachers objected and requested that they be included in a supervisory capacitye The students declared that this would make the teacher the de facto chairperson of each council, and that the Teachers' Association was trying to dominate the student councils. The teachers answered that they had no desire at all to put pressure on the student councils, they simply had to fulfill their duty to provide over-all direction and leadership. They got angry. They accused the students of preventing them from fulfilling their responsibilities. Was that democracy, they asked, to neglect responsibility? The students finally gave in.

It was a fact that the faculty had no desire to put pressure on the students. Still, I found myself unable to make a judgment on the issue. I had noticed something new in this event: it was the teachers who had lost control, not the students. The teachers had exploded, adamantly pressed their point, and overwhelmed the studentse On this one issue, the whole faculty rallied together.

Among the students, there was no particular unity of opinion. They simply explained to their teachers, without any display of anger, that it was possible forethem to fulfill their supervisory responsibilities in another form. I was especially struck by the way the students who were not at the head of the class spoke, groping for words with which to persuade their teachers. As the teachers' voices grew more and more shrill, the children maintained their positions patiently, shaking their heads, "No, that's not right, we're not saying the faculty wants to pressure us.e' It seemed as if the usual positions had been turned around: it was the teachers who were acting like petulant children. In my role as "neutral" arbitrator, I devoted my energies exclusively to trying to appease the students for the sake of the teachers. I might more truthfully describe it as trying to appease the teachers. The matter was settled with a compromise plan that made it possible for the teachers to participate.e

What worries me is that the student activism which began with incidents like this seems to have stagnated. It is stagnating right now. To see those children, who were just beginning to use their minds again, stop short without reaching their full potential, disturbs me. I thought once again about the question of pressure. They need just the right amount of pressure to make them growe Sensing myself very much the school-teacher in these

speculations, I canèt repress a wry smile, but finally I realized what was wrong. The Communist Party is at faulte It has failed to push them further and further ahead.

The day I came to visit I rushed to your house barely able to restrain my cries of protest. I had gone to see the ceremonies that afternoon. It made me want to see youe-where else could I have gone?--I almost started running to your place. How many people had been gathered there? I think the newspapers gave it accurately at onee hundred thousande Like a country hick, I hung in the back of the crowd with my rucksack on my backe Whenethe Emperor arrived, not everyone took off their hats, but I took mine off. The Emperor stepped up on the platform and doffed his own hat. A cheer went upe Some mechanical pigeons flew into the aire The Emperor lefte My watch, which read 3:35 when he appeared, read 3:36 when he left. The whole process had taken exactly one minutee But when the ceremony was over, I was stunned by what began to happen.

It was as if nothing had changed. You remember the dawn mobilizations we always had during the ware Where I lived the hour for assembly was 4:30. By the time we had gathered before the local Hachiman shrine, with our wooden guns and bamboo spears, had called the role, and performed our drills, the morning light was breaking. Then came the end, the signal for dispersal, a human wave beginning to

move. . . e All were poised to run in the various directions of their lives. A bustling, hard-nosed, every-man-for-himself throng. Some hastily tied wooden guns beside lunch-boxes on their bicycles and hurried off to factories. Some went directly to trolley stops and train-stations. Some, panting for breath, ran home for breakfast, downed their meals, and rushed off again. Just minutes before we had been forced to crawl over the ground on our bellies, to fall to our knees at the drill instructor's command--all of this was forgotten in an instant. Men and women of venerable years, burning with indignation over some reprimand, would throw off the mood with a will, forbidding themselves the luxury, as they moved at a feverish pace. A moment's swift and chilling transformation!

What happened after the ceremony the other day was exactly the same. Figures, footsteps, conversations of a thousand people dispersinge. . . yet, within the limits of my hearing, not a single person uttered even the first syllable of the word "constitution." Everything else was there, but that was lacking. The first syllable of the word . . . I don't believe the Emperor and Empress even uttered it as they were returning homee It's true, there were some adolescent girls in the crowd who wept, but that was because they had seen the Empress. The Constitution had nothing to do with it. That Constitution we were

being told to stuff with meaning, to cram so tight it burst--I believe there were few in all Japan who wept with eagerness to squeeze inside it, body and soul.

The day was so beautiful and clear that when the ceremony was over I sensed the approaching twilight especially keenly. I watched the people around me scatter. Some, I imagined, were going back to work; others to the movies, still others to continue some deal on the black market or to see their families. Wherever it may have been, they had the look of people hurrying homeward, back to real life. "Homeward": how shabby, how pathetic, how touching, how Japanese they looked. "Homeward"a-and where was home for these people? "Be it ever so humble . . ." the refrain came toamy mind. What a melancholy phrase, really, and what a strange, enormous contrast there was that day! Between the homes of the scattering people--people whose faces bore no trace of the day's event, as if it had not been because of the Constitution that they had gathered there, that the mechanical pigeons had fluttered up--and the homes to which their Majesties the Emperor and Empress returned. I'm not talking about a difference in size but a difference in feeling. A human difference, sensed in the very skin, in the feeling of relief upon arriving home. The difference between the sigh of relief heaved by fathers coming home at the end

of the day, or the sigh of relief breathed by their daughters, who have hurried home with minds tensed and jaws set against imaginary assailants waiting in the dark, who have turned at the punctuations of narrow hedges unlighted by even a candle, thrown down shopping bags, and checked for beri-beri with their thumbs pressed to their shins--and the sigh of relief that the Emperor and Empress utter after their limousine has ground down the gravel path, after the world behind the pine trees has faded from view, as they go through the entry-way, across the threshold, and into a world where no noise or voice can be heard, where human life stirs notaa single echo. Isn't this the difference that the Communist Party should teach to the people, and teach them to feel it?

So many aspects of our situation are exemplified in the Constitution; it could be used to teach us so many things. The morning it went to the Diet, or perhaps the day before, SCAP announced in the newspapers that the a preliminary draft had been written by a Japanese.[11] This is our Constitution, supposedly being created by Japanese, and yet the government has had to beg the foreigners to announce that a preläminary draft was written by a Japanese! Can our people accept theaabject position of their government in silence? And why couldn't the Communist Party have been the first to perceive this and to call out to the people? They tell us that the Emperor had the

Constitution promulgated by the Privy Council. "Had" it promulgated . . . what is the meaning of this? The Privy Council disposed of one hundred and three clauses in twenty minutes. One hundred and three clauses of what, I wonder, could that group of balding heads have disposed of in twenty minutes? Perhaps the procedure was merely a formality. If so, I can understand it as such. But then was that a new gold screen that was standing behind them while they conferred? Or had they taken the old one, which was damaged in the bombing, and restored it. Everyone knows that gold screen before which the morning conferences used to be held, and the generals' conferences. Even the hatestand was in its proper place over on the right-hand side. The same cloth was on the table. If they really wanted to restore that screen, couldn't they have at least transformed it into something entirely new, something to go along with the Emperor's change to civilian clothes? Utterly shameless gold screen. Its sheen, unmistakable even in photographs, its quiet, elegant glow--could any Communist have failed to be shocked by it? On May Day, five hundred thousand people rallied outside the Imperial Palace. Two hundred and fifty thousand people gathered to demand their rice.[12] For the Constitution, after mobilizing the Emperor, the Empress, the Prime Minister, the schools, and the pigeons, they scraped together a hundred thousand people who forgot it in one

minute. Why doesn't the Red Flag make the people see that their actions constitute a criticism of the present state of affairs, or at least that this is what is conveyed? If establishing a "sense of national conscience" is one of its chief goals, isn't the Communist Party sabotaging itself?

There is so much in all this for both teachers and students to think about. As I see it, both have their points of view. It is my earnest desire to handle the problems correctly. This means that sometimes I clash with the students I admire in my heart of hearts, that sometimes they mock me, treat me like a feeble-minded old man, call me a rightist--yes, they even say this to my face. They do it without malice, I know, but I wonder if the boys can tell how much this hurts me. I suppose this is what is meant by the term "infantile leftism." In those books I never read--I have to laugh! And I'll be a grandfather this spring. Of course, I don't want to make too much of an issue of my age, but it is painful, after teaching for so many years, to be ridiculed by the very students I valued so highly. To hell with it all, I want to think. What can I do? Keep pressuring them? It's the only way I know of to make them grow. At the root of their problems, I would like to suggest, is their conception of the Emperor and the Emperor system. Their inability to distinguish between the individual and the

institution. It is because of this distinction that the question of abolishing the Emperor System is inseparable from the task of establishing a sense of national conscience. To put it another way, what we have to think about is the liberation of the Emperor as a human being. I've thought all these things over and I feel my position is correcte Its mishandling of these questions is the source of my dissatisfaction with the Party's newspaper, Red Flag. Red Flag that the students I love in my heart, whose disrespect hurts me most, press on me and wave under my very nose.

I would characterize my own attitude toward the Emperor largely as one of sympathy for him as a human being. There are many reasons for this, but most of the time I think it is simply because I feel sorry for him. Probably you remember the time when you and I were in our late teens, when the Emperor made a visit to England. A British painter did a picture of him which was sold in Japan as a post-carde I remember to this very day thee burning shame, the indignation, the self-pity I felt when I first glanced at it. The scene was dominated by a quiet black. The black of frock-coats and swallow-tail suits, dotted with the white of collars, the pink of facese In the central foreground stood one figure in a khaki uniforme The body was slightly bent, and there was a dash of sepia above the collare Since it was a water-

color, the facial features were difficult to make out. But that dash of sepia was gazing up at the tall race around it like a lost child encircled by adults. "Look, he can talk.é' "He's trying to tell us something.é' "What a dear little man!" In their utterly refined conversation, I could almost hear these comments, and I covered the picture with my hands. What they said, and what was in their minds, were two different things. But what was in their minds had been captured in this simple sketch, and I myself was exposed there. "That's it exactly!"e I thought. But the "it" that was brought to my mind by the sight of that figure, standing slightly bent before the eyes of the others, I dared not utter in words or in my inmost heart. I will not write it even here. I cannot, moreover, I should not. The hands which reached out to cover that picture were the hands of my race. It was a spontaneous gesture of brotherhood. How could I have kept myself from hiding it? And now, to what extent does the Communist Party bear this sense of racialesolidarity with the Emperor? I urgently desire to know.

I'll tell you another way in which I sympathize with the Emperor. This is just one of any number of instances, but I recall a time, I don't remember the exact date, when the Emperor became ill and the Crown Prince assumed the position of Regente One of our class-mates, the son of a Diet member, proudly broadcast his knowledge

of the inside story, with a little act imitating the Emperor's actions at the time when he went insane. But it's not that scene that sticks in my mind. Rather, it is a small article that appeared in a corner of the newse paper reporting some comments made at the time by a sailor. I can even remember where I was when I read it. A bench in the waiting room of Tokyo station before it was rebuilt. The story went like this. The Crown Prince had finally assumed the position of Regent and a newspaper reporter had gone around the city to find out what the reactions were. (To tell you the truth, this in itself was something quite new to me. Wasn't it just a matter of course that the Crown Prince became Regent when the Emperor fell ill? What was the purpose of reporting people's reactions to this?e I was given to understand that in Tokyo, unlike the countryside, this was an event. A big event.) After collecting impressions around the city the reporter had latched on to two sailors in the railroad station. (Or is my mind playing tricks on me? I recall very well that it was in the station that the reporter talked to the sailors. And just as clearly I remember that it was on a bench in the station that I read this article.) During the interview one of the sailors told the reporter he felt sorry for the Empress. At the time I couldn't understand this remark. The fact that the reporter had been quite moved by it was even more puzzling.

All that registered in my mind was a vague, rather sinister image of an unhappy married woman in her middle years, a woman whose life was utterly caught up in, and inextricable from, the tangled web of political power, a woman lost, as if in a dense forest, amidst feudal lords, aristocrats, heirs apparent, and their intrigues, assassinations, forced retirements, fratricides, restorations, and whatever else surrounds an Imperial family, in Japan or anywhere else.

Now I understand what the sailor meant. He was not expressing pity for "an Empress whose husband has been incapacitated by illness" (I can't remember the official word for it). He was referring to the change of status of the woman who had given birth to the Crown Prince once her son became Regent. He was expressing sympathy for a woman so caught up in the meshes of a political machine that she would no longer be permitted to call her own child "son." Perhaps there was something in his family background that sensitized the man to this. Yet on this point I, too, now truly feel sorry for them. Perhaps in saying "this point" I have not been especific enough. Then let me say that I am talking about the question of family. For there is no real home here. There is no family. Each and every aspect of these lives is an expression of politics, nothing else. That is truly pitiable. And surely the greatest pity of it is that, in order to act at

all, these people have had to relinquish any sense of shame. They are individuals to whom the right to exist as individuals has been completely denied--examples of a totalitarianism so pure that it is based on the total sacrifice of the individual. Has there ever been an individual so violated as to be forced to declare that he was not divine?

I know of nothing quite so pathetic as those photographs of the Emperor and his family which were published just after the war. I've heard that the Meiji Emperor would never let a photographer near him; that this is why photographs, as opposed to portraits, of him are so rare. He kept himself so inaccessible that, as laughable as it sounds, some painters began making portraits of the legendary Emperor Jimmu in the likeness of the Emperor Meiji and vice-versa. But look at any of the photographs of the Imperial Family taken after the war! Even the little Crown Prince is smiling. A darling boy with a hint of mischief in his face. Certainly that quality exists in him. But he was forced to put it on display, they wouldn't leave him alone until he did so. Look at the photographs in the Yomiuri from the third of this month. Those sleek, rounded contours . . . do you think the Empress wanted to look that way? "This way, please. Now smile . . ." Everything, right down to the expression on her face, is there at the photographer's

command. If only they wouldn't force them to smile! Don't let them do that to you! You see, we must liberate these people as individuals. But how much does the Communist Party feel this? I would like to know concretely how much sympathy the Communist Party feels for the individual who suffocates as Emperor. To what extent does it harbor a palpable, even a physical, sensation of sympathy and of responsibility to liberate the Emperor from the Emperor System?

If you want to know why I'm carrying on about all this, it's because I sense that what is a problem for me is also a problem for my students. I had a depressing experience recently. I happened to come across a group of boys arguing on their way home from a newsreel. Much of what they were saying was confused, and I gave theme my view. They opposed this on principle, blindly. I did whatever I could to meet them halfway, but still, I felt the position they were taking was inconsistent. When I pointed this out, they exploded and attacked me. I confess I hadn't seen the film. But since the film and what they were arguing about were two different things, I persisted and proved my point. Finally someone put the question to me, and I admitted that I hadn't seen the film. There was a burst of laughter and a shout of triumph. With my conviction unchanged, I went to see the newsreel. The students had misunderstood it. They still

doa But something above and beyond that left me miserably depressed.

The film was one taken during the Emperor's visit to Chiba Prefecture. Among other things, it showed him visiting a school and an agricultural association. Like a ventriloquist's doll, he asked the perfunctory questions and received perfunctory answersa But watching the film I sensed a new liking for the man. Perhaps it's improper of me to say this, but the fact is that I felt more able to like the Emperor than I ever had before. He was just what the newspapers describe him to be: in every sense a "nice" man. Nice, yes, almost womanly. His words came out quickly and his voice had a high, shrill tone. With his head fluttering to the left and right, he gave the same formal greeting to everyone he met without distinction. He was not playing up to people, however. He was a man incapable of such calculation. His were not smiles born of some ulterior design. He was simply doing what he was told. What was more, he himself preferred it that way. The scene reminded me of another news film I had seen, made during the visit to Japan of the puppet ruler of Manchuria. The Emperor went to greet him at the station. He welcomed the Manchurian Emperor, shook his hand, and then introduced him to each one of the Imperial Princesses in turn. The very picture of a "nice" man. A man to whom a sense of pride was completely foreign.

The Imperial Princesses were standing in a line on the platform. The Emperor went down this line sideways, one step at a time. Before each princess he would clatter to a stop, jerk his chin forward, and make his introductione But at times, one step sideways was not enough.e The Emperor was still a step, or half-step, away from the next princess. At such times he would invariably leap the extra step or half-step sideways in great haste, with his sword rattling. To simply bend the upper half of his body slightly in the direction of the princess would have required a poise he had nowhere in him. So he clattered from one end of the line to the other, vainly trying to keep his sword in place with one hande Here, indeed, was a nice man, one almost felt anxious for him watching all this. His manner toward the Emperor of Manchuria, toward the other members of the Imperial family--from all these relationships it was clear that here was a man whose sense of vanity, concern for appearances, and desire to impress, was far below that of the average person.

At the same time, he maintained his dignity as Emperore Perhaps I can best describe that combination of dignity and humility as an attitude of scholarly detachment. But once again, there is something about this particular scholar that evokes a special sympathy in me. Maybe this is because of a story I once heard about him. A distant relative of mine had a father-in-law who worked

for the Ministry of Home Affairs. In his work for the government, this man was a specialist in sanitation, but privately he nurtured a scholarly interest in malacology, the study of molluscs. The old man passed away a few years ago but I've heard tell that he would even stop in the midst of his round of New Years calls to scour out sewers. The very sight of a sewer that looked like it might contain some interesting specimens was enough to make him throw off his crested cloak and start digging, sipping noisily at the mucus that ran down from his nose. His old wife would stand by cursing and railinge It seems this man once lent a specimen to the Emperor, who had learned about it through a conference report or the like. He returned it with unusual promptness, however, making no effort at all to have the specimen donated to the Imperial Family as an offeringe Compared to the attitudes of art collectors among the aristocracy and their ilk, the Emperor's interest was so purely scholarly it almost seemed like indifferencee The old man used to brag at the time that "in the length and breadth of all Japan" he was the only person who had ever lent anything to the Emperore To my mind the incident revealed that, whatever the level of his expertise might be, there was at least no question but that the Emperor was a scholare The story comes back to me as a concrete instance of his scholarly detachment.

"Your house wasn't bombed, was it?" "Do you have the textbooks you need?" Speaking quickly, in his shrill voice, the Emperor in the newsreel I was watching went from one question to the other without waiting for an answer. The girl students he addressed--first and second graders, at that--were hardly capable of answering as they stood with their handkerchiefs pressed to their eyes. The teachers who went along beside the Emperor (conveniently, of course, there is always someone along) would nudge the children with their elbows and whisper answers in their ears, but since the lead role, the Emperor, just went right on askingequestions it was a scene of utter confusion. All the while, the Emperor was putting his hat on, taking it off again, on again, off again . . e but what else was he to do? At every step as he moved along this mechanical doll of an Emperor found someone new toe greet. He made his way into the building with his hat constantly moving up and down. Anger, and a desire to protect this man swept over me. "Leave him alonee" I wanted to wave my hands and stop them; I wanted to hide him from people's eyes. My body seemed to rise of itself from the dark bench. It was then that I heard a burst of noisy laughter go up from the balcony on the left-hand side. I turned to try to see who it was, but I coulde make out neither faces nor human shapes in the darkness. Twelve, thirteen, even twenty, people were laughing

raucously. I was unspeakably depressed. There was no doubt that the Emperor cut a ridiculous figure. The scene was hilariouse But then they should have laughed at the hilarity of it! What I heard was a coarse, unnervated laughter, without a shadow of mirth. There was no trace of enjoyment, no saving glimmer of self-mockery. My heart sank. In a flood of despair I understood what was lacking in the Japanese people. I understood their spinelessness, their utter lack of wille The nation is morally impotent. With a wave of nausea rising from the pit of my stomach, I left the theater and went home.

The people I heard laughing must have been black-market typese Whoever they were, they were completely confusede So were my students. They blamed the script-writer of the film for slanted editinge By showing girl students weeping and shouting "Banzaie," they claimed, the film was trying to stir up emotions of Emperor worship in the audiencee If what they were criticizing had been even that effective, I think I would have been relieved. The black-market types were a case in themselves, but these were the middle-school students whose spunk and intelligence I myself respected, and something in them was retardede It was their moral sensitivity. What was there in the composition of that film could be called reactionary? What else could they have expected of those girls, who might have been their little sisters, or their

future lovers or wives, except that they would cry? And what was there in the whole of that Imperial existence, these weeping children included, that should not have been cried over? My students may not comprehend all of this on an intellectual level. But they should at least be able to feel it. I tried to explaine I urged them to write letters to the school girls in Chiba.e I suggested they begin a debate, including both teachers and students. But I couldn't persuade them. The simple, stupid honesty of the Emperor as a human being, the corruption of those who danced in attendance on him--these were two things they were unable to comprehend. It was as if their antennae were missing. In terms of moral sensitivity, the young men in the movie house may have been idiotse But these boys, my students, made me so angry I could have thrashed them. Before they criticize script-writers, they should get out of their systems the anger they feel, as members of the opposite sex, at the sight of silly, weeping little girls. "Criticism," they call it--what a travesty!

A lack in the part is a lack in the wholee The failure of the Communist Party is the failure of all Japane The attitudes I see in my students are no different from the attitudes that prevail everywhere among our second-rate journalists and lawyers. It must have been some time after the experience I just described that the

Manchurian ruler was brought here to testify in the War Crimes Trial. I feel outrage even now when I remember the way it was written up in the newspapers. I read the reports in the morning with my insides seething. "We admit the Kwangtung Army was ruthless. We admit you were threatened with poison. But does that give you license to evade the responsibility for your actions, to claim you became a puppet simply out of fear for your life? Surely you didnât have to go so far as to have pro-Japanese poems inscribed on your fan. You were hoping to become the ruler of Manchuria. Isn't that the truth?" Thus spoke our lawyers, intoxicated with their logic and eloquence, drawing out each step of the process, savoring the pleasure of it as the defendant stumbled. At their sides scurried the supercilious newspaper reporters. The ugliness of it: an entire nation, Emperor and citizens together, looked on as our noted lawyers carried out their sweating, tedious sadism, in complete disregard of the contrast, and the distinction, between the puppet and the puppeteer, the Emperor of Manchuria and the Emperor of Japan. Why didn't Red Flag sound the alarm and jolt us out of our stupor? This was too much for any citizen to tolerate. Too much for even one foolish old man to tolerate.

When Nanking fell I went, as a representative of my prefecture, to march in the lantern procession in Tokyo

(there was still a Tokyo then)e We lighted the lanterns and wound our way through the streets of the city until we reached the Imperial Palace, where we cried out and waved our lanterns in the air. From the other side of the moat behind the pine trees, the Emperor waved his lantern in response. We waved our lanterns, at the time, with the joyous hope that with this event the war would be over, that we would be released from ite I think the Emperor felt the same way. But in Nanking, the slaughter and violence took their course. All of us--you, myself, the Emperor--were unaware of it. Even today, when I go back over it in my mind, this is all thateI can remember--that we waved our red lanterns joyously, with the hope and prayer that with this it was over and we would be released. During the War Crimes Trials I tried to imagine a scene (regardless of whether Japan at the time would have permitted it . . .e but I think it would have) where the Emperor of Japan went to visit that unhappy, deposed ruler, where the two embraced each other in their grief and asked forgiveness for their misfortune and their folly. The truth is that it was the Emperor's own Emperor System that went on to rob me even of the chance to apologeze, for example, to Tamaki for the stupidity of waving those lanterns. But if the Emperor had ever made such a gesture, I think I could have forgiven him at least that immediately, I wouldn't havee

deprived myself of the consolation of being able to forgive. As it was, the Emperor never went to see the former puppet. Only one Japanese, who had once been a servant of the Manchurian ruler, while standing in the shadows of the thick pillars of the courtroom, caught a fleeting glimpse of his former master, so changed he could barely recognize him.

Can someone tell me what all this means? Is the peoples lack of concern a manifestation of contempt for the proceedings of the War Crimes Trials? A former Emperor has been kicked aside, a monkey abandoned by its organ-grinder, and the court speaks of "moral deterioration." It is the state of moral deterioration embodied in our own Emperor System that we should be ashamed of. Without a revolution that liberates the Emperor as an individual from this system, we can never liberate our people from semi-feudalism. Why doesn't Red Flag discuss this? How can we talk about the "rebirth of the nation" without confronting the task of establishing a sense of national conscience, national morality? And out of what will a sense of national conscience be born if we cannot deal concretely with the Emperor and the Emperor System? The Communist Party, which should be leading the way in all this, seems oblivious to it. An article I read the other day in Red Flag illustrates the party's attitude beautifully:

> . . . The September 1 Asahi reports that, as the democratization of Japan proceeds, the question of the Imperial Family's e "descent to the status of subject" has become a central issue. The Emperor himself, at a conference on the status of the Imperial Family in July, discussed the matter heatedly.
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> However, as even our trumped up "new" Constitution proclaims, all Japanese people are equals under the new law and there should be no distinction in their social, economic, or political relationships made on the basis of class or rank. Now, of all times, can there be anything more ridiculous than to speak of the "descent" of the Imperial Family, as if there were some flight of stairs between "subject" and lord? We should ask just one thing of these "descendants of the gods" who are proving so difficult to dispose ofe return the rice and the gold you have taken from the Japanese people and go back to the High Plain of Heaven.e[13]

"As the democratization of Japan proceeds the question of the Imperial Family's descent to the status of subject has become a central issue. . . ." Yes, indeed. This is what Japan calls democratization. Any other label would have fit as well. Where does the status of subject exist? Red Flag never takes up this questione Its line of logic is, since the Imperial Family are "descendants of the gods" they should "go back to the High Plain of Heaven." But who, tell me, is descended from the gods in this country? If one of the Imperial Family appeared asking for a ticket to the High Plain of Heaven, what would we do? I raised these points during a discussion of the article at school. Even the anti Red Flag faction

attacked me. (A Red Flag discussion group was organized at school, comprised of both students and teachers, a pro and an anti Red Flag faction. It was something of a nuisance to attend the meeting, but I was interested in seeing how they handled the question.) I quickly realized what was happening. Teachers and students were taking real delight in lambasting the Imperial Family with phrases like "descendants of the gods" and "High Plain of Heaven." They were content to ignore completely the real, substantial power these people exercise in everyday life. The writer of the article, moreover, had led them to take this preposterous position.

The sheer stupidity of such thinking astounds me. The notion of the Imperial Family's descent to the status of "subject" must be firmly rejected. There are no subjects here. Wasn't there a poem in which one of your favorite waka poets referred to himself as "subject"? "Peace reigns/ Pure and clear/ On heaven and earth./ Even the prince/ Calls himself 'subject'." I'm quite sure that poem was written by Prince Takamatsu. I quoted it, I'm ashamed to say, in a wartime ceremony I once carried out in a country school. After I had finished, an official from the prefectural government appeared--perhaps he, too, was fond of waka--and made a point of referring to this poem in his own little sermon. At the time Prince Takamatsu was, in fact, was referring to himself in the first

person as "Your Subject." The effect of this figure of speech, in which a person of the exalted rank of prince called himself "subject," was to make the entire nation into subjects by implication. The Communist Party today is simply using the same kind of sophistry in reverse. We should oppose this trend firmly. Should a day ever come when the Emperor, or any member of the Imperial Family, can truly apologize from the bottom of their hearts, if there are any who wish to punish them out of a desire for revenge--that is, to makethem "subjects," even "subjects of the people"--it would be correct to struggle against these peoplee The point is that there should not be a single subject in our nation, be it the Imperial Family or anyone else. Elevate the Imperial Family to the status of full-fledged citizens of Japan! Isn't this what the establishment of a sense of national morality would demand? To "send them back to the High Plain of Heaven" is moral deterioration. This is not the abolition of the Emperor system but the reverse. As long as Red Flag encourages them, there's no stopping my students in middle school from gaining a sense of superiority by tuning up their noses at the Emperor. But in reality, an Emperor who at best has a veneer of "democratization" will sweep them into his train, and they will go on forever looking up to him as an object of worship in their heartse

Another Red Flag article. This is one about the controversial strike in the girls' academy.

> No sooner did we hear that the priests on Mount Ōmine had decided to maintain the old tradition of forbidding women to climb the mountain than we learned of the firing of a teacher in a Kumamoto girls' academy who had expressed approval for girls wearing short hair. These are not events we can laugh off with some joke about the "long road to women's emancipation." To require girl students to wear long hair, just like demanding that boy students shave their heads, is an infringement of basic human rights. The problem is that are people in Japan who do not realize that it is outrageous to base our educational system on such inhuman ways of thinking.
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> It is the Imperial Rescript on Education, which distinguishes between ruler and subject, but which does not recognize the existence of human beings, which is responsible for creating these educators without an ounce of human blood in their veins. This rescript, the Minister of Education has told us, expressed the "immutable law of nature." Two months later he ordered it shelved. But they are making no attempts to abolish it. They are confident that soon enough its time will come again; in fact, they are praying for it. Let us boldly do away with this relic of the past century, and with it the long hair that hinders women from their work.

I find this article unintelligible. As usual, I happened to see a newsreel of the events. In the first place, it was not "priests" who opposed the opening of Mount Ōmine to women, it was a bunch of mountain witch-doctors. But let's get to the question of the strike. Wasn't the strike the real issue? The Red Flag missed the boat completely. What in this entire matter bore any

direct relationship to the Imperial Rescript on Education?[14] To begin with, whether to wear short hair or long hair is an individual choice. The problem is that one man, the principal of the school, had tried to regulate this, and had no scruples about firing a teacher in order to enforce his will. "These are not events that we can laugh off with some joke about the 'long road to women's emancipation'." Who but the writer of this article would even dream of laughing it off like that? The "problem," the article says, is "that there are people in Japan who do not realize that it is outrageous to basee our educational system on such inhuman ways of thinking." I fail to see in what sense this is the problem. The students in a girls' academy were not allowed to wear short hair. A teacher was fired to enforce this regulation. The students went on strike. These are the problems.

Emperor, subject, the ImperialeRescript on Education, humanness . . . the Communist Party's way of dealing with all these problems makes me angry. To scorn the old powers without becoming aware of their own power as individuals is becoming dangerously like a habit for my precious students--after all these years of teaching there could be no more bitter disappointment. To go on, with the taste of disappointment constantly renewed, simply because of the fresh hope that appears before one's eyes, is the teacher's way of life. But it is habits of mind

like the ones these students are developing that constitute moral deterioration.

To tell you the truth, I know even now that my students like me. I have no real grounds for expecting that I will be purged, andaeven if I am, I am confident I will find a way to go on. What does torment me is that when the children ridicule me some of the influential members of the faculty seem to be drawn into it. The mere sound of the word "rightist" coming from a studentás mouth sends a smile of triumph over their faces. I suppose to their way of thinking a school principal, no matter how progressive, is by definition conservative and right-wing. When I talk about infantile leftism among the students, these influential faculty members treat me like an old fool who doesn't know how to act his agea they cut me down in the crudest way. These people don't intimidate me, of course. It's just that I find it unpleasant to fight with them. Unhappily, this has resulted in their siding with the students. Even more unhappily, they are able to invoke the authority of Red Flag in everything. Well, it's not worth losing sleep over. But it certainly makes me angry. And I blame the Communist Party. If they had opened up these issues and explored their implications step by step, they could have made things much easier for an old man like myself. After all, I'm not trying to get anything out of this. I'm just doing my job as an educator.

The problem of disposing of the Emperor System is a matter of putting moral principles into practice. The more people there are who treat the Emperor as an object of scorn and ridicule, the longer the Emperor System will live on. Especially if these are young people. I am simply asking people to consider this. The man in the barber shop I always go to is a great opponent of the existence of the Emperor. He's also as opinionated as anyone I've ever met.a His suggestion is to reduce the Emperor to the rank of the aristocracy, giving him a title that refers to the land he lives on, something like "Duke of Chiyoda.a' Here's a barber whose approach is more realistic than Red Flag's, I dare say.

A year ago on the fifteenth of August I cried as if I would never stop. Of all the people who wept on that day of our surrender I think I wept the most. I wept as if to wash away the numberless sins I had committed, all of them. I knew, at the time, that I had never been deceived about the nature of the war. But since then I have lived everyday with the sense that I am being deceived. The New Year's Day proclamation was particularly heartless. We are being deceived. The Communist Party is letting us be deceaved. This is my honest feeling. During the teachers' strike this year the Ministry of Education put down the teachers by forcea and then announced that it would not give in to "violence."

Why did the Communist Party keep silent about this? When the radio stations went on strike broadcasts were stopped completely. Why didn't the Communist Party urge that programs of even better quality be produced, that the nation be told that this was the workers' way of fighting with the government? Why didn't party members in the Electrical Workers' Union mobilize people to start repairing broken transformers and turning out new ones as fast as they could, to give away electric light bulbs and heating plates, to set up street lights in bombed-out areas, at stations, along dark roads, to bring electricity to farming families, introduce mechanized rice-hulling . . . and to charge the bill to the government and big industry so that, when the settlement was achieved, their strike would have lighted up Japan?

Then there was the furor aroused by the anti-Emperor posters. Why didn't the Communist Party take the position that what was written on that poster described exactly what was wrong with the Emperor System?[15] That there is nothing wrong with calling a spade a spade, as long as we take the appropriate action? Why didn't they cry out to the poeple, not that it was the person whoe wrote these posters who insulted the Emperor, but that the existence of the Emperor System itself is an insult to the honor of the Japanese people? Why didn't they ask what kind of symbol, in fact, our nation and people could find

in emperors born, over six hundred years and thirty generations, as bastard sons of concubines (they needn't use exactly these words), and for whom there has been no continuous succession of legitimate wives? Why has the Communist Party left the burden of emancipating the minds of the people to a fewestock phrases, as if it had forgotten that Communism was once known primarily as an intellectual movement? Why . . . yes, it was in Red Flag that I was recently reading about concubines. I don't recall the details of the article, but I do recall its tone of derision. "Concubines are to be despised. They are contemptible." But, Communists, will you remember that every one of these concubines was a woman and weak? Will you remember that, even among women, it has never been a rich woman who had to sell her body? Their beautiful, joyous flesh was their one and only means of survivale Don't think of a concubine apart from the man who possessed her. Think especially of the man who possessed her. And ask yourselves thise was it not the Japanese family system, and the law that enshrined it, which ultimately forced love, as love, to exist in this stigmatized form?

But thereés one thing, more than any other, I beg you to stop. Have Communists been persecuted? Tortured? Put to death? They have. I know this from my own experiencee But be mindful of the fact that you yourselves

live on. The living should not make the dead their constant burden. Rejoice that you are alive; rejoice that you live one! And do not let yourselves forget that our whole people, as a people, have been subjected to torture and death. Consider this fact: how many young men with no trace of malice in them have tortured, pillaged, and murdered in the name of Japan! Some of them have now returned and are carrying out the same violence in their homeland. Not far from here a group of young men have attacked and raped girls from the farm villages near the factory. These young men have crossed over the line; they have passed the point of being victims of violence and have been driven to inflict it on others. The young men who are alive today, the same ones who stand in front of your platforms listening to your speeches, are here only because they were not killed. But they have watched many die before their eyes. They have abandoned many corpses. There have even been times when, gritting their teeth, they put their comrades out of their misery and lived on. Be aware of this, Communists, and understand fully that in all of this they were given nothing to sustain and support their sense of morality. Boast of your dead only after you have considered carefully how you yourselves confronted the power that cut them down.

If you cannot do this, you are really not a whit different from the Japanese Emperor or the Japanese lawyers

in their attitudes toward the former ruler of Manchuria. Yes, and it is in this way that you can show true respect for the strong ones among you, the "unconverted."[16] The fifteen, or even eighteen, years during which they were referred to by this most prosaic of terms should be praised as if with strains of music! Make them your treasures! Make them the treasures of the people! Make this the foundation for a sense of national conscience! Teach the people the difference between the corrupted morality of ministers and generals, nobility and emperors, big capitalists and land-owners--in short, of all who surround the Emperor--and this lofty basis of morality which rings out before their very eyes. Teach them to recognize this as a most fundamental difference; one that is immediate, tangible. Tears come to my eyes at the very thought that they were born of our people! I want to hold them aloft for all to see. Even my hot-headed students could never ridicule these children of Japan. And, in fact, they do not. This is my last and final bitterness.

I still reminisce about my father these days. He used to have a certain expression in his eyes, and I find myself remembering it, wanting to preserve the memory. On New Year's Day and at local festival times, he would report to the prefectural office in glittering regalia. He took great pleasure in this. Since he was the chief

of police in our town, and an honest and upright one (if such a thing exists), I suppose his feeling was entirely justified. As chief of police, he must have accepted all manner of assignments as his "duty." He lived with this, simply for the sake of his children. One could say that there lay a whole side of his personality. The side revealed, for example, when he refused to lay a finger on bribes he might easily have accepted, refused them for the sake of his children.

When I was eleven or twelve, and going to middle school, the question of my father's occupation was of no concern to me. It first began to trouble me when I entered higher schoole At that time I began to notice, from one thing after another, that it had also begun to trouble my father. He would put his imposing regalia on in the dining room, sit there having a smoke as he enjoyed small glances of admiration from my mother and sisters, and then, knowing all the while that I was in the room right next to him, he would go out through the front door without ever showing me his facee Thinking it would only make matters worse if I confronted him, on the days when he wore that uniform I made it a rule never to step out of my room. It was my habit to sit there, my ears pricked up to the sound of every footstep, picturing him in my mind as he relaxed, smoking, in the dining room; as he passed the door of my room and became, for those few

seconds, smaller than he really was; as he went out through the front door, past the next telephone pole, and let out a breath of relief. Now I've reached the age that my father was then. Although I mourn his loss with all my heart, I'm determined never to be like him. If differences of view arise between my children, or my grandchildren, and myself, I want to embrace them, take my gun from the wall, and guard them on their way to the tochkas of the opposing camp. Maybe this is a scene from a story I read long ago. Yet this is how I would like to be, and I think myself capable of it.

I started this letter talking about myself, and that led to my family, to Japan, and to the Japanese Communist Party--now I seem to have come full circle again. But I want to warn you, no matter how incoherent this letter may have seemed, it's not because I'm venting my anger at a group of students on the Communists. I'm simply someone who cannot bear to watch the flames in these young minds die out under the influence (I won't even blame it on the party as a whole) of one group of Communists. Sometimes, when all this keeps me awake at night, I even wonder if I am not a man who worries more about the Communist Party than the Communists do, and then I laugh at myself for coming up with such a notion. What I've written tonight is just a part of what I've noticed. What weighs on my mind most is the sight of boys

of fifteen and sixteen who debate about the Emperor in terms of hectares of land and the value of his capital, and cannot get beyond this. I can predict that, unless someone really stretches these students' minds, the government bureaucracies will one day let down their nets and easily haul the catch awaye

Very recently I made one more blunder. The government issued regulations concerning memorial services for the war dead and I, not so much in ignorance of the existence of these regulations as in ignorance of their nature, opposede[16] Why, I asked, shouldn't we hold memorial services in our schools? Let the whole town attend. Let all the students attend. It is only by mourning publicly for the dead that the meaning of their sacrifice can be understood by all. To forbid the participation of local governments or the use of public buildings for this purpose is to condemn these men to have died like dogs, meaninglessly, in the service of a war of aggression. Well, I had just about made amends for this blunder when the grammar teacher I mentioned earlier returned. As soon as I received the news I planned for a big celebration. I was determined to carry this out. It was to be as extravagant as possible within the limits of the regulations. It was my hope that this welcome of the living might, conversely, express our mourning for the deade Another member of the faculty had made a similar requeste

In the meantime, I received a message from the teacher's wife and, since this was quite out of the ordinary, I rushed over to see her. I bitterly regretted my rash plans that were on the verge of being realized. I learned that the teacher, his name was Umemoto, was alive and well, but that he had returned with most of his ears, his nose, and his lips missing.

Let me explain a little bit more. The Umemotos stood out as a couple, even as a family. Both he and his wife were local people. Umemoto had been a handsome young man, and his wife every bit his equal in her beauty. They grew up in this village, were childhood sweethearts, married as virgins. Although I did not assume the formal role of go-between, I tookaon an even greater responsibility. I know things about the two of them that no-one else knows. They were a pure couple; both were healthy and strong, and the enjoyment of each other's beauty to the utmost soon bore fruit in the birth of a child. This was the Umemoto who returned, to put it bluntly, with the lobes of both ears missing, with two bare holes for his nose, and with his lips torn away to the roots of his teeth. At the request of his wife I went a bit ahead of her to meet him at the station. I ended up accompanying them all the way home. In the weeks that followed I watched them endure. I have no doubt that all of them, including the children, will continue to bear up beautifully.

But what hardships lie ahead. I feel dizzy when I think of it. As a disabled veteran, Umemoto, of course, qualifies for a monthly pension from the government. The fact that there is no provision for adjusting this for inflation is one problem. A far graver problem is that Umemoto absolutely refuses to appear in the presence of others. Naturally, we kept a place for him on the faculty. But Umemoto himself has requested permission to resign. He continues to insist on this, so there is no way I can refuse. Since he is not literally an invalid, however, I am at a loss (a principal to the end!) for the proper method of handling the resignation.

Today, aside from his own family, Umemoto talks to no-one but myself. The trouble is that I can only keep talking if I glue my eyes to his. The eyes and the mouth are not so bad, but I have to make a superhuman effort not to look at his nose. As a plain-looking man with a plain-looking wife, I probably don't fully understand what it's like, but somehow it seems inexpressibly cruel that this could happen to a beautiful couple, especially to the wife. When I think of it, everything before me darkens. Cruel, that is the only word. If Yoshiko can forgive me, there are even times when I think it was better for her that Tamaki did not return in this way. And when I try to think how many people must be alive in Japan today who feel it would have been better to die, my

heart sinks. It's not that I fear Umemotoâs wife will come to detest him. It's just that--I know it sounds wrong of me to say it--I sometimes think that her grief over the ruin of her husband's beautiful flesh must be immeasurably deeper than that of Yoshiko over Tamaki's publishing business. You, Communists, I feel like shouting out to be sure you know about this! The truth is that, without going back to the Emperor and the Emperor system, we cannot create the conditions for solving any of these problems.

But it's dawn now and I hardly know what I'm writing any more. I told you I had made a resolution to make a resolution; it looks like I'm going to have to end withouta explaining what I meant. And there were so many other things I wanted to ask you about . . a if you have any idea what it costs for a family to survive these days . . . if you remember how much the old swords that policemen used to carry weighed . . . they're being abolished in favor of night sticks now butaI wonder if there's really a difference, for example, in their capacity to break a person's arm? But the day is finally here, and I've finished my five cups of sake. Has this just been five cups worth of drunken gibberish? Well, at the very least, one old fool who doesn't know how to act his age has gotten something off his chest. And this is, after all, "to be continued."

The Crest-painter of Hagi

I saw her when I was walking through the town of Hagi. I was taking a leisurely stroll. My business was finished. I had time to take a short walk around the town before I caught the train back to Tokyo.

The business that had taken me all the way to Hagi was something of a nuisance. I had been given the job of mediating between two people who had been unable to come to terms with each other for years and forcing a confrontation by clarifying the differences on both sides. Or I could just as well say it was the opposite. The two had been at each other's throats for years and I had been asked to bring about a reconciliation by placating both sides. Now anyone knows that in a situation like this, an entangled as a feud between husband and wife, it never helps to throw in advice from the sidelines. I was aware of this before I started out, and I suspect even those who dispatched me had more or less predicted the outcome. At any rate, I had dispensed with my obligation to be of assistance in this thankless matter, and I was feeling relieved. I was already over fifty. People seem to think that a man of this age can be mobilized for any useless activitya. . . "Oh, let's send him around" It's ridiculous, but how can one protest? Now it was over. I was savoring my lack of responsibility. As a traveller I was free of cares. I walked along. The day was fine.

Hagi was a small, quiet town. I had seen its most

famous sight, the academy of Yoshida Shōin, the day before.[1] The water in the river I was walking beside was clear. The rooftops of the houses were low. I cam to a place where there was a large house. It stood at an intersection of four roads and occupied one full corner of the crossing. One side of the house was completely enclosed by an earthen wall, which terminated at the corner in an impressively large gate in the Edo town-house style. Through the gate I could see in to the entranceway of the house. The area inside the gate, a garden with a single large rock, had been swept clean. There was no-one in sight, and the place was silent. It looked like an old house, the home of an influential family. It was not a samurai mansion, however. It seemed more like the home of a local wealthy family, purveyors to the government since the Tokugawa period. There was no building comparable to it on the other corners of the crossing. I noticed a name-plate on the gate, embellished with fine calligraphy. I read it with surprise.

There was no mistaking it. Of course, the man was from the Chōshū areae From this very town of Hagi. He was a Diet member in the largest conservative party, well respected within the party, a very active man. In age he was surely younger than I. You could get some idea of the wheeling and dealing he was up to just by looking at the news reels. So this was his house--the

dapper gentleman who waxed eloquent about peace and understanding when the San Francisco Peace Treaty was signed. No doubt, he had taken full advantage of coming from the birth-place of Yoshida Shōin to make his way in the world, I thought. But that was about all that came into my mind. I felt no real antagonism toward the man.

It seemed to be a festival time in the town. I noticed a wooden platform with a drum on it set up in the road, right in front of the gate of the house, as if in preparation for an evening celebration. A pair of unglazed sake vessels, containing wands with paper decorations, had been placed on the top shelf of the platform. The platform appeared to be the property of the town, not of this particular house. The very fact that it had been set up here, however, suggested that this was a familye with considerable influence in the town. It had probably even become a custom to set up the platform here every year, once in autumn and once in spring. There was more to that than met the eye, no doubt. But the practice had a certain mellowness, tooe In my traveller's carefree, irresponsible mood, it was the mellowness that attracted me.

When I was a child, there had been a big land-owning family named Murai in my own village,ewhose head was a senior member of the House of Peers. Since he was also a leading stockholder in the Imperial Agricultural

Association, the man must have been quite powerful there, as well as in the House of Peers. But when he came back to the village, he was "the master at Murai's.ė' Especially in the eyes of the childrene When the Ise kagura dancers came around, they would perform for a whole half day in the spacious front garden at the Murai'se In our part of the village, the pair of men who came around under a lion's head and tail would dance just one dance, their flutes shrilling, in return for a handful of rice. If there were chidlren around, the lion would open his mouth wide and snap at their heads for them. That was the end. But in Murai's garden a troupe of ten men or more would play flutes, beat drums, and twirl boxes on top of parasols. One man would balance a pole on his forehead, thene add another, and another, thrusting up into the sky. A clown would tell jokes. As for the lion dance, at the Murai's house the dancer would take a dagger in a wooden sheath out of his bag made from scraps of red cloth and whirl its naked blade around in a motion that simulated the undulation of waves.e We children would come, each one bringing a straw mat to sit on, and devour the scene with our eyes . . . Such were the innocent thoughts to which my traveller's mind strayed. The gentle rays of the sun, shining over the festival platform, crystallized them.

The fact that this was a small and remote town with

no direct connection to my everyday life, with no relation to me even as I stood there, further settled my mind. I remembered a time--when was it?--that I passed by the village of Tsuwano on a train. It lay on the way from Masuda to Ube, a handful of tile roofs flung into a place not even large enough to call a hollow in the mountains. "Ah, so this is Tsuwano!" I had thought. It looked so lonely, as if it had been abandoned there in the mountains, but if I were to look inside, who could tell what lay powerfully coiled within? There lay Tsuwano, but for the time being I had wanted to fly from it. It was easier to look out at a village abandoned in the mountains.[2]

And so I walked along. Before I realized it I had come to a place where there were other people walking on the road. There was a bridge. Once I crossed it, the road became more bustling. I passed a dry goods store, a stationer's, an oil store, and a shop which sold electrical appliances. The road became busier still. Yet even here I saw no sign of a "Hagi Ginza" or any other foolish imitations of that nature. It seemed the people of this town had no need for such affectations. Or so Ia preferred to think, without much evidence, when a large post office came into view. The post office was on thea right. Next, on the other side of the street, I noticed a sweet shop. Remembering my daughter, who had always reproached me for never bringing home souvenirs from mya

trips, I went right in. "I can have something packed here and mail it from the post office across the street," I thought.

It was true that in all the trips I had taken, I had never once bought gifts to bring home. It's not that I don't want to buy them, it's just that it's too much trouble. It's too much trouble to drag them along from one place to another. This isn't only travel souvenirs I'm talking about. I've always found buying anything a nuisance. There are many people who come home from work at night with packages wrapped in attractive paper bearing the name of some store. Not me. When my wife sends me out to buy something, I'll go and get it. If she tells me, "Go get some sweet potatoes," or "Go get some liver," that's just fine. But when it comes to browsing through some little store in a neighborhood I happen to be in and picking out just the right thing, somehow I don't have the knack. At the tobacconist's, I ask for my package of Peace. If I need a pair of boots, I march right into the shoe store I have in mind and buy them. With the sole exception of used bookstores, this has always been my practice. It must be very inconvenient having someone like this for a husband. I heard a lot of complaints about it when we first got married, although recently my wife seems to have given up.

But it was rather my daughter, by then in her third

year of middle school, whom I suddenly remembered and pitied. She seemed gradually to have become convinced of the fact that her father, whether he went out on business or took a trip, would never bring back anything for her. Something I can't define must come into play when a child unconsciously develops a conviction like this about a parent. The psychological reverberations must be long-lasting.

This same daughter had felt left out, ever since she was a child, for not having a father who went to work. From time to time, until about the age when she entered first grade, she used to ask me, "Aren't you going to work today, Daddy?" or "Wouldn't itebe nice if you could go to work like the others?" As a five and six year old child, she must have envied the lives of her playmates, with their morning farewells and evening greetings to their fathers. In her childish eyes, theirs were mornings and evenings with changes and with special rules.

On Sundays, some families in our neighborhood take their children on picnics. Others go to the movies. Even when this isn't the case, the husband, for example, may have gone to some hot springs resort to do company business. He'll come back with pickled horse-radish for the family. Or a box of rice crackers. Some of this is shared with our family, too. But since I always come back empty-handed, we have nothing to offer in return.

This, too creates problems in the day to day life of the woman of the house, I'm sure. Nevertheless, when the week's one long-awaited holiday arrives, I want to lavish the day on myself alone. Not only that, people I can't see on any other day of the week come by on Sunday. So it appears, in my daughter's eyes, that the man she calls "father" does not exist for the sake of the girl who is his child at all. It's very convenient, of course, that she seems to have gotten adjusted to this, but whether the adjustment itself is a good or bad thing for her development is open to question. Still, even this anxiety was just something which happened to flicker across my brain. The truth remains that whether I'm out for the day or away on a trip I like nothing better than to walk along with my hands completely empty. That this same person had just now turned unhesitatingly into a sweet store must have meant that were some crevices in my heart. There was some room for play in my mind.

There were all kinds of sweets in the store. It seemed to be a well-run establishment. The proprietress was an elderly woman. No sooner had I entered than I noticed there were candied summer oranges for sale. One large, glass case was filled with loose pieces of the candy. On top of the case, large, medium, and small boxes, already filled and packaged, were lined up according to size. A few sample boxes had been left uncovered to

reveal the amounts of candy inside. These candied summer oranges appealed to me. Somehow the position in which they, among all the sweets in the store, had been set, and the care with which they had been displayed--all these things suggested that the storeę itself, placed great value on theme Not only that, but the square of paper pasted on each box actually bore the words "Special Products of Hagi." Ah, these were really fine!

I've always been fond of sweets.e But candied fruits are my favorite. It doesnėt even have to be fruit. Candied fuki root is quite good.[3] Candied figs are better yet. But best of all are the bitter spring limes and the summer oranges. The places where the white ofethe sugar crusts up on the yellow are fine. Memories of Sumoto in Awajė floated into my mind.

Between 1940 and 1941 life in Tokyo had gotten very difficult. There were never enough cigarettes. Sweet things disappeared from sight. Mothers holding infants to breasts from which no milk flowed were a pathetic sight. It was impossible to buy eggs. I remember, once, finally getting my hands on some eggs after taking a series of trains out to some place in the country where it was rumored that there were eggs for sale. Coming back on the train, in the press of the crowd, my package was crushed. When one egg breaks, the one next to it usually goeseę too. Thereewas nothing else to do but get

out at the next stop and quickly suck the eggs fromethe cracked shells while the train was taking on new passengers. It was a desolate sensation, sitting on that windy bench, frantically slurping up two raw eggs from shells I had broken with my hands. The child was waiting for me at home. Since summer her mother had been in jail. It was a time when the police were dragging everyone off to jail indiscriminatelye With an eighteen month old daughter on my hands, I was at my wit's end. At last, in December, when the year's end was almost upon us, my wife came homee Spring, 1941, begane It was then that I received a letter from my friend in Sumoto, asking us to come down with the child. "We have rice here,e' he wrote. "There are eggse There are vegetables. Come and eat to your hearts' content."

We went down to Sumoto. It was a town in the middle of Awaji island and there really were eggs there. Egg-sellers peddled them in baskets from door to doore Sora beans were growing a full meter high. Within a week, my daughter began putting on weight. My friend forced food down our mouths like a man pumping air into empty tirese Still, sweet things were raree One day when I was wandering around near the harbor part of towne I discovered some candied summer oranges for sale in a run-down little penny candy store. Bread stores sell scraps of left-over bread. Here, in similar fashion,

were scraps of candied summer orange. When candied fruits are moved from one place to another little pieces break off. It seemed that these had been gathered up and put on sale. But there was no mistaking it, what I was looking at was the real thing. The sugary crust clung firm. A yellow color floated beautifully within its film. I bought the candies, took them home, and boasted to my friend of my discovery.

"You're going to eat that?"

"Every last bit of it!é

"Really? In that case, we have the real thing heree Nobody in our family likes it."

We laughed idiotically at what he took down from the shelf. It was far too elegant. The sugar-coated fruit, hollowed out in the shape of a boat's bottom, just filled an adult's outstretched palm. My daughter bit joyfully into the lumps of sugar in the crust. This was even earlier than December, 1941.

"I'll take one box, please,é I told the elderly proprietress. "And could you wrap it, please?e I want to mail it.é

"Of course. This is a gift, then . . ."

"No, we'll be eating them ourselves."

Some people deal quite rudely with a customer they recognize as a tourist. Others go out of their way to be kind. This woman wrapped my box with care. Painstakingly,

she tied it up with string. I asked to borrow a pen and wrote my daughter's name and address on the package, but when I offered to pay the wrapping charge, the woman refused. I thanked her gratefully, went across theastreeta and pushed open the big door of the post office just opposite the shop.

The post office was quite empty. Here, too, there was nothing brusque in the way they treated people. But in the split second that I lifted my package onto the counteraI had a change of hearta and decided to carry it all the way home. The cover of the box was flat, but the bottom was slightly indented. A good toss would probably crack it. There was no danger that the candy would slip out, even if the bottom cracked, but when it came right down to it I preferred to have the box undamaged. It wasn't a very bulky package. It would fit easily into my bag.

A young woman had appeared across the counter from me. I gathered she was waiting. I thanked her with my eyes and walked out with the package under my arm.

It was a busy part of town. I wandered on, savoring the thought of the candied summer oranges I was holding, which I would carry with me all the way home. I seemed to have come to a market area. In among the local stores were places where people who looked like travelling peddlers or farmers from outlying hamlets had spread out

vegetables or scraps of remnant cloth for sale. There were the same cheap trinket stores one sees all over Tokyo.

I had no place to be at any particular time. If there were any limit to my freedom, it was simply a matter of getting myself to the station by the time the train for Tokyo came through. But I had been given the money to pay my fare, even to buy lunch on the train. And Tokyo was very far away. I was in a small town, and my fruitless labors were, for the moment, behind me. Not only that,a for the first time in my life, I had bought my daughter a souvenir. I was carrying it in my arms. In a peaceful, almost roguish mood, I kept on walking.a

The face of the town changed slightly. After I reached a certain point, the little stalls that had dotted the roadside disappeared. The larger stores that remained were different in character from those in the market area. There was a small rice store, a watch-maker's, a dentist's; then even establishments like this dwindled in number. It was not exactly what you would call a shimotaya area, yet it had the distinct atmosphere of a back street neighborhood removed from the center of town.[4] Since there were no roads branching off to the left or right, I imagined that this main street simply continued on, gradually narrowinga until it reached the very edge of the town. If I followed it directly, the land belonging to

the town of Hagi would no doubt come to an abrupt end and one would come out in the neighboring hamlete Somewhere around here, I knew, the land should open out to the sea and yet I saw no sign of it. The air bore no trace of the smell of tide.

It was then that I came upon a strange sighte

What first caught my eye was a tiny shop, and a woman inside it, facing toward me from behind a glass doore I use the word "shop," but at the time it was impossible to tell what type of shop it was. I wasn't even certain that it was a shop. All I knew was that it couldn't have been a homee In a home, what reason would there be for a woman to sit, facing outward like that, behind a glass door? But then, although I say she was facing outward, it was rather that she was facing in my direction with her head bent down. An awesomely fine nose was all I could see of her face. Sitting that way, the woman seemed to be working on something intently. I stepped slightly closer to the door as I passed it, and tried to look in.

With the bright glass door in front of her, the woman was sitting at something like a small deske Perhaps it would be better to describe it as a sewing table. Her head and shoulders were terrifically bent, and she was gripping something small. Images of the watch repairman and the seal engraver I had seen in my childhood floated into my mind. The seal maker--his right hand gripping a

slender knife, his left hand carefully turning the narrow cylinder of wood or stone so that the point went into its surface. The watch repairman--with what looked like a toy telescope that had been cut in half inserted into one eye (I never knew how he held it there), the eye guiding hise pincers through the insect-like needles and cogs. The watch-repairman . . . but it waserather the seal engraver that this woman resembled. She, too, was holding something in her left hand. With her right hand, she was doing something to it. I stepped a bit closer still to the door.

At any rate, it wasea fact that this woman's nose had a high, fine bridge. She seemed to be a young woman. Her face, however, was impossible to seee All that was visible as I lookededirectly down on her was her black hair, and below that a part of her foreheade the two even lines of eyebrows, and, finally, the highebridge of her nose. Her mouth and her chin were compeetely hidden from view. Certainly, the bridge of her nose was exceptionally high. There was almost something foreign-looking about it. Since I couldn'tesee any of the other features on her face, I won't hazard a guess as to her age. But she was definitely not an elderly woman. The impression was rather of youth.

She held a long, slender brush in her right hand. Its tip was fearsomely thin.e The same type of brush as is

used in Japanese ink-painting, I imagine. Its tip was as sharp as a gimlet's point. She held it so tightly that the end of the brush inclined slightly toward hera

In her left hand, the woman seemed to be holding a small pot or jar. In fact, it was a bamboo tube, less than an inch in diameter, which contained a black, sticky liquid inside. With the lightness of a pricking needle, the brush tip darted into the tiny tube. Ever so lightly . . . the very tip of the tip. The movement had all the frail nervousness of some long-beaked bird pecking up water from a plate. The woman then placed the tip of the brush onto something round which she was holding just below the prominent bridge of her nose. This seemed to be another bamboo tube, again less than an inch in diameter, over which she had loosely thrown a piece of cloth, pulling taut just the area which lay over the round surface of the tube. Women use a similar technique when they pull a ravelled sock over a tea-cup in order to mend it. When I finally realized what the woman was doing was painting crests in an almond leaf pattern on a silk haori,[5] I let out my breath with relief. But I was quite exhausted.

I moved away quickly. There was something in the scene I could not bear to look at. I feared that if the woman went on in this way the high bridge of her nose could only get higher and higher, that splendid line of

her nose could only get thinner, sharper . . . what a harsh fate it seemed! Her very youthfulness made it seem all the more cruel, as if I were watching a grater wear, wear away at the beauty of that nose. In the second that I pulled away I discovered that, after all, there was a sign next to the door. A small piece of wood nailed to the wall bore the words "cresā-painter," written in phonetic script. "Crest-painter--so she is a crest-painter," I thought, repeating the word to myself.

It was the first time I had seen the word "crest-painter." But surely such a word existed. Come to think of it, stacked on the shelf at the woman's back there had been pieces of the heavy paper used to wrap garments. But was this how a crest was made, painted on dot by dot with the tip of a brush? The labor must wear one to the bone. And, for all that effort, could one really make a living out of it? Wearing silk garments with family crests could hardly be the fashion these days. Or perhaps they had made a come-back. Yet even if there had been a revival of sorts I could not imagine a sharp increase in demand. "Cresā-painter" . . . what an uncertain trade to live by! Materially, what a fragile base! In cities like Kyoto or Osaka there were probably people who made a living by taking on the cresā-painting for an entire department store. But in Hagi, in Chōshū, no matter how great the increase in people wearing crested garments had

been, the number must be insignificanta As for the price per crest . . .

I noticed one more sign as I started to walk away. It had been nailed on to the wall so that the words read down in a vertical column, just below the "Crest-painter" sign. It said, "Home of War Dead.a' By contrast to the other signa this plaque was quite small.

This woman, then, had lost her husband. She was a widow. It was inconceivable that she could be working there as someone hired for her skills by this "home of war dead.a' She was, in short, the mistress of the house.

That a beautiful woman with a finely chiselled nose--and fromathe look of her shoulders she was a tall womana too--a war widow, should be a "crest-painter"a that the work of painting crests should be a labor performed without any machinery or electrical power, entirely by hand; that it should even be possible to make a living by painting the crests on crested garments--the harshness of it all seemed accentuated by that nose, with a bridge as high as a foreigner's. "Crest-painter"a for every ring of quaintness in those syllables a fresh bitterness welled up within me. It was not as if the easy-going, carefreea vaguely self-indulgent mood in which I had been walking was suddenly transformed. But to the rhythm of the words "Crest-painter . . a the crest-painter ofaHagi . . ." I quickened my pace as I walked alonga

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

[1]Nakano Shigeharu, "Iwayuru geijutsu no taishūkaron no ayamari ni tsuite," Geijutsu ni kansuru hashirigakiteki oboegakie Tokyo: Hakuhōe, 1974, p. 191.

[2]See Shisō no Kagaku Kenkyūkai, ed., Tenkōe Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1959.

[3]See Donald Keene, "Japanese Writers and the Greater Asian War," Landscapes andePortraitse London: Secker and Warburg, 1972, pp. 300-321.

[4]Yoshimoto Takaaki, "Tenkōron," Yoshimoto Takaaki Zenchosakushū XIII. Tokyo: Keisō Shobō, 1969, p. 13.

[5]Ibid., p. 13.

[6]Kamei Hideo, Nakano Shigeharuron. Tokyo: Sanichi Shobō, 1972, pp. 78-95.

[7]Yoshimoto, "Tenkōron," p. 25.

[8]"An-san" means oniisan, "older brother" in Fukui dialect.

[9]Kawaguchi Tsukasa, Nakano Shigeharuron. Tokyo: Tōjūsha, 1975, p. 150.

THE HOUSE IN THE VILLAGE

[1]The ledgers contain the names of the entire village population, giving the religious affiliation of each individual. The practice of having government officials carry out such investigations, known as shūmon aratame (宗門改め), was started by the Edo bakufu as an attempt to repress Christianity.

[2]The women's names in the ledgers are written in katakana, the phonetic symbols usually used for words which have no specific Chinese ideograph (foreign loan words, onomato-

poetic words, and the like). This manner of writing women's names gives most of them the status of onomato-poetic words. Benji is particularly shocked to discover that some women's names are literally exclamations. "Yai" means "hey" or "Come here!" "Chiri" means "dust."

[3]Much of the action in "Mura no Ie" takes place inside a typical farmhouse in the northwestern part of Japan. Taguchi here is sitting on the agari-gamachi, a kind of step which leads from the dirt floor area of the kitchen and genkan up into one of the main rooms of the house, which has a wooden floor.

[4]Taguchi, and later Benji's father, speak in a distinctive local dialect prevalent in Fukui-ken. "An-san" is derived from ani or oniisan and means "big brother."

[5]Imo no ko, or potato tubers, are boiled and flavored with soy sauce to make nishime, a common side dish served with sake.

[6]Kasuri is a woven cotten cloth with a distinctive "splashed" pattern, usually of white on a dark blue background. The fabric has traditionally been used for clothes of peasants and craftsmen.

[7]During their period of confinement, thought criminals were periodically subjected to gruelling interrogations during which, it was hoped, confessions (often inadvertend) would be made about their "traitorous" activities. Such confessions could then be used to demand tenko, or recantation, on the part of the prisoner, or to justify the prescription of a term of imprisonment.

[8]"The problem" refers to the tendency of members of the left-wing movement to inform on each other, a common occurrence in the 1930's. Throughout "Mura no Ie" references to activities of Communist Party members are oblique, rather than specific. Censorship, and strict surveillance of "dangerous elements," made it necessary to exercise great discretion in writing about such matters.

[9]"Sakurai" is a fictitious name for Kobayashi Takiji, the left-wing novelist killed while being detained by the police in 1933.

[10]Doyō refers to the eighteen day period in July ande August thought to be the time of most intense heate The exact dates for the beginning and end of this period vary from year to year, according to the lunar calendar.

[11]The Japanese expression Magozō uses is hachi mon (八文), eight "penniese" (In Edo currency a mon was 1/1000 of a kan.)

[12]"It" is, of course, his faith in Communism, which Benji feels he has managed to maintain through this most recent interrogation by not confessing that he had "belonged to an an illegal organization."

[13]Benji is recalling phrases of a song of Yamato-Takeru-no-mikoto in Chapter 87 of the Kojiki: "Let those whose life is secure/ Take from the Peguri Mountains/ (of the rush matting)/ Leaves of the great oak/ And wear them in their hair/ O my lads!--" The song has been interpreted as an exhortation to the young to enjoy themselvese Nakano had a great appreciation for poetry of the Nara period, as did one of his favorite tanka poets, Saitō Mokichi. I have here referred to the translation and notes in Kojiki, tr. Donald Philippi. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969, p. 248.

[14]Benji uses this allusion to suggest he will die, figuratively, surrounded by his comrades, beloved and admired for maintaining the faith.

[15]Magozō and Kuma are members of the True Pure Land Sect of Buddhism (Shinshū), along with the overwhelming majority of people living in their area. They send donations to the main temples of the sect, Nishi Honganji and Higashi Honganji, in Kyoto.

[16]The hozuki (ground cherry or winter cherry) plant produces a hollow, reddish pod.e

[17]Magozō seems to be familiar with a story about Socrates and Xanthippe recorded in Diogenes Laertius. Describing several squabbles between Socrates and his wife, Diogenes writes: "We ought not to object, he used to say, to be subjects for the Comic poets, for if they satirize oure faults it will do us good. . . . When Xanthippe first scolded him and then drenched him with water, his rejoinder

was, 'Did I not say Xanthippe's thunder would end in rain?'" from E. Capps, T. Page, W. Rouse, ed., Diogenes Laertius, The Lives of Eminent Philosophers, in The Loeb Classical Library. London: William Heinemann, 1925, p. 167.

[18]The Seiyūkai Party, founded by Itō Hirobumi in 1900, was a dominant force in Japanese politics in the late Meiji and Taisho periods. Magozō may be referring to Inukai Tsuyoshi, who led a merger of his reformist party (The Kakushin Club) with the Seiyūkai in 1925. The merger was opposed by some members of the Kakushin Club who felt the move was opportunistic.

FIVE CUPS OF SAKE

[1]Purges of educators who were seen as having promoted a pro-war ideology were carried out under the occupation government in the years just after the war.

[2]Nakae Tōjū (1608-1648) founded the Wang Yang Ming School in Japan. Yamaga Soko (1622-1685), also a Neo-Confucian, wrote The Way of the Warrior. Yoshida Shōin (1830-1859) was a leading thinker of the Later Mito School. All of these men founded their own schools, attracting disciples from all over the country.

[3]The narrator describes a subtle act of protest against the war, one of the few forms of resistance open to him. He insists that the integrity of the Japanese language be maintained, and tries to oppose the manipulation of the language for propagandistic purposes or the creation of a pro-war, ultra-nationalist mood. The Chinese character 征, sei, means literally "to conquer or subdue." During the war, this character came to be substituted frequently for the common verb 行く, yuku (to go), in such a way that the phrase "Sensō e yuku" (I am going to war) took on the double meaning, "I am going to conquer."

Similarly, since the word ōshō (応召), originally a combination of 応 (to respond) and 召 (to order), was being used to mean "induction," the principal insists on a precise grammatical construction in the active voice, which would involve the individual's recognition of responsibility for participating in the war effort. Apparently it was common for people to use the passive voice with this compound (ōshō sareru), although grammatically

incorrect. The principal further clarifies his point by suggesting that another compound, literally meaning "to order to assemble" (shōshū, 召集), be used if the speaker wants to use the passive voice.

In asking to give sei the reading yuku as he goes off to war, the young instructor expresses the idea that he would like to conceive of himself as going into a victorious battle; in this sense he is swept up in the prevailing nationalistic atmosphere. The tragic outcome of his participation in the war is described at the end of the letter.

[4]The narrator uses the expression saruchie o shiboru (猿智慧を絞しぼる).

[5]The Special Attack Corps was the official title used for the suicide ("kamikaze") squadrons sent out during the Pacific War. Each school was given a quota of boy students it had to send to military or naval training schools. This included middle schools, where the boys were still in their very early adolescence.

[6]The narrator refers to a proverb of Chinese origin which was commonly used during the ware The proverb, "Daijōfu wa gyokusai o tattobi, gazen o hazu," (大丈夫は玉砕を貴びe 瓦全を恥ず) means literally, "The great man prizes the shattered jewel and is ashamed of the whole tile.é' More freely, it is "Death Before Dishonore"

[7]The narrator refers to Shimazaki Tōson's novel, Hakai, published in 1906e

[8]Moxibustion is a traditional Chinese and Japanese medical practice in which a cure is sought by applying heat to different parts of the body. Moxibustion, acupunture, and massage all utilize similar tsubo, or sensitive points on the body. Moxibustion, then, can also be used to reduce muscle tension and promote relaxation.

[9]The narrator begins to use the common phrase demodori to describe Yoshiko's return home. He then realizes that this customarily refers to a case of marital separation, whereas Yoshiko has come home as a widowe

[10]If a boy child were born, he would automatically become the chōnan or heir of the family. In the traditional system, this would make his status higher than that of his

two older sisters. Since the sisters were born of the first wife, the narrator would feel he had slighted them.

[11]The final draft of the Constitution was written by Americans and translated into Japanese.

[12]The narrator refers to the so-called "Rice Riots" held on May 5, 1948, in front of the Imperial Palace.

[13]The writer of the Akahata article uses the word Takama-ga-Hara (High Plain of Heaven) used to describe the land of the gods in the Kojiki, the ancient official mythology. The Imperial Family, according to the Kojiki, is descended from gods who came to earth from Takama-ga-hara.

[14]The Imperial Rescript on Education outlined the ethical foundations of the Japanese education system, as enunciated by the Emperor Meiji in 1890.

[15]Tremendous controversy was stirred up by a poster carried in the rice demonstrations of May 1948. The poster in question made a direct attack on the Imperial Family: "The Imperial Family are stuffing theirabellies! Thea common people die of starvation!" Matsushima Matsutaro, who carried the poster, was indicted for "damaging the honor of the Emperor as an individual" or the crime of lese-majeste. He was sentenced to eight months of labor in November 1948, but the sentence was repealed after aa campaign was waged in his favor. The issue was sensitive, however, and the Communist Party's position was to support Matsushima's right to carry the poster, while side-stepping the issue of the content of the poster. According to Nakano, the poster accurately described the nature of the traditional Imperial Family and the people. The party should not have hesitated to "call a spade a spade.a'

[16]The word "unconverted" (hitenkō) designated a small minority of imprisoned left-wing intellectuals who preferred to remain in prison rather than make statements of conversion.a

[17]The narrator originally thought the "nature" of these regulations was to stir up nationalistic or militaristic sentament. According to the regulations, it was forbidden to have ceremonies for the war dead in schools. The narrator felt that if school ceremonies were opened to the

public, they could be used to mourn the tragedy of the war. Later he realizes the government regulations were intended, in fact, to ensure that ceremonies for the dead did not serve to revive a militaristic mood.

THE CREST-PAINTER OF HAGI

[1]Yoshida Shōin, an extremely popular national hero and leader of the movement for Restoration in the late Tokugawa period, had his academy in Hagi.

[2]Tsuwano is a place of significance for Nakano, since it was the birthplace of the famous Meiji writer, Mori Ōgai (1862-1922).

[3]Fuki is a rhubarb-like plant, sometimes called butter-bar in English.

[4]A shimotaya area is a former market area where store buildings have been converted into dwellings, rather shabby-looking.

[5]Haori are the silk jackets with wide sleeves, worn with hakama (formal skirts) or kimono.